An Illustrated History of

Pakistan Army Aviation
&
War on Terror
2000-2025

Major (Retd) Aamir Cheema

The views expressed in this book are those of the author and do not reflect the official views of Pakistan Army

Pakistan Army Aviation and War on Terror

Foreword by GOC Army Aviation 08-09

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Abbreviations

Army Aviation A Corps and Regiment of Pakistan Army commanded by a major general.

ATC Air Traffic Control

AH-1F Attack Helicopter ‘Cobra’.

Algad a small water stream

Air OP Air Observation Post

AGL Above Ground Level

ALG Advance landing Ground

Aircraft Aircraft includes both fixed wing and rotary wing

AA Anti Aircraft

BM Brigade Major, an appointment held by the rank of major

Base An army aviation tactical formation

CO Commanding Officer an appointment , a lieutant colonel

Commander. An appointment a brigadier

Captain a rank, in army aviation a captain of aircraft can be of any rank.

Crew A flight crew comprises of pilots and flight engineer

Crew Chief a non commissioned or a junior commissioned officer

C Nite an equipment which enables pilots to fly at night

FOB Forward Operating Base

FLOT Forward Line of Own Troops

FAAR Forward Area Arming and Refuelling

FLIR Forward Looking Infrared Radar

FC Frontier Corps of Militia and Rifles

Flight A tactical formation of army aviation commanded by a major

Gun Ship An armed helicopter .

SOTF Special Operations Task Force

Squadron A tactical formation of Army Aviation commanded by a Colonel or Lt Col

Lt Col Lieutenant Colonel

TOW Tube Operated Wireguided missile

NM Nautical Mile, it is equal to 1,60 statue mile.

RW Runway

P-Course Pilot Course

RW Rotary Wing

FW Fixed Wing

Currency & Current. A pilot who has not flown for a long duration requires currency (few hours of flying with instructor) and after undergoing it becomes current.

Gunner The co-pilot in a Cobra who sits in front and fires cannon or rockets on orders of captain.

Co-Pilots. The pilot who is still undergoing training and is junior to captain of aircraft irrespective of his rank.

EME Electric and Mechanical Engineers. These battalions maintain aircraft

VHF Very High Frequency

SSG Special Services Group

FF Frontier Force

AK Azad Kashmir

KPK Khyber Pakhtunkhawa

NWFP North Western Frontier Province (now KPK)

Durand Line The western borders of Pakistan with Afghanistan.

FATA Federal Administrative Tribal Areas

GOC General Officer Commanding an appointment , major general.

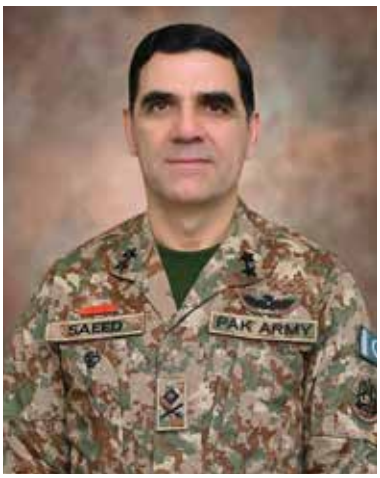
CGS Chief of General Staff an appointment, lieutenant general

COAS Chief of Army Staff

PAF Pakistan Air Force

Message by Chief of Army Staff

Foreword



Maj Gen Saeed Khan,
GOC Army Aviation

Pakistan Army Aviation has been in the forefront of this prolong war on terror from the onset and has flown close to a million flying hours since 2001. Army aviators saw the unfolding of the conflict through observation over the mountainous frontier and western border during the winter of 2001-02 and soon it became obvious that in order to overcome the menace of extremism posed by the Taliban and Indian; wrapped in the customs and traditions of loyal tribal belt , a new doctrine integrating army aviation and ground troops specifically the Special Services Group has to be initiated. In last two and half decades this doctrine of Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) has matured through experiences nurtured by blood and sacrifices to a level which is second to none in the military history of past and present.

This war on terror from Army Aviation perspective has been primarily a war of Rotary Wing (helicopters) in which Attack helicopters (Cobras and Mi-35) supported by cargo helicopters (Mi-17) and assault helicopters, (Bell 412, and UH-2H) conducted operations either independently or in support of Army and Frontier Corps (militia) in Khyber Pakthunkhawa and Balochistan provinces. Before this conflict, to a great extent there was feeble experience of infantry soldiers and even less by frontier corps troops; today that perspective in entirely change, as no less than eighty thousands troops have been through a flight. Integration of army aviators being integral part of ground commanders plan is the key to the success.

One of the most significant achievement by Army Aviation over the last two decades has been the mastery of night flying across the country and in engaging the militant hideouts and supporting own posts during hours of darkness through gunships and evacuation of casualties. This has been attained through a vigorous and rigorous work and dedication by army aviators. Another aspect which even , we were not fully aware of , is the tireless dedication and professionalism of Army Aviation's Electrical & Mechanical maintenance battalions. the field maintenance crew in the most hostile environment due to extreme weather and threat of small arms fire kept the entire fleet airworthy. In the same breath the ever present troops of own forward area arming and refuelling companies (FAAR) are applauded for their contribution; they armed and refuelled the Cobras while coming under hostile fire.

My thanks and gratitude to all the flying instructors in Army Aviation School who in reality made this success possible. Inducting a new flying machine requires flying crew and to train young officers into a professional army aviator within the time requires dedication and skill , which has been the hallmark of our flying instructors and alma matter.

This year (2025) has a special place in our history, a new Attack Helicopter has been inducted

and also an Air Transport Squadron has been formed having ATR-90 twin engine fixed wing aircraft. Both these inductions have a history and their impact is already being felt, the troops are now being ferried back and forth from their duty and leave thereby having tremendous impact on morale. Certain organisational changes has been carried out thus merging few old squadrons under 1 Army Aviation Squadron being commanded by a colonel.

In this period of quarter a century, Army Aviation has progressed tremendously in every aspect. New inductions like Ecureil, Bell 412, Mi-171, Mi-35, Puma SA 300. Fennec, King Air 350, Cessna C-6 & C-8, Gulfstream 450, Augusta A-139, Enstorm 300, ATR – 90 & 45 and Z-10 ME attack helicopter. New bases has been made operational in the north and south of Pakistan, air strips has been upgraded in the deserts . My sincere gratitude to the author Major retired Aamir Cheema who himself has been part of Army Aviation and he voluntarily spent over many years to finalise this book.

Phase 1.

Pakistan Army Aviation & War on Terror. 2000-2005

Pakistan Army Aviation prior to 9/11 was feeling the heat of the American and Western countries economic and military sanctions in the aftermath of Chagai explosions in 1998. Nineties overall was a mixed bag of interaction with Americans, the good relations of Afghan War turned into cold; lone exception being the flying interaction at Somalia where Pakistan Army Aviation Cobras and infantry battalion rescued them when their Black Hawk was downed. Army Aviation had meanwhile turned its attention to the Russian helicopters, Mi-17 one of the most widely used military helicopter in the world was inducted and became the backbone of aviation support to field army. Cobras and Pumas were economised in flying due to spares concern.

Pakistan Army faced multiple challenges from the onset of new millennium, American invasion of Afghanistan in hunt for Al Qaeeda resulted in refugees and militants entry into own tribal areas, thereby requiring an increased presence of own troops. On 10th October 2001, One Puma helicopter of 21 Army Aviation Squadron was placed at Peshawar and within a week a Composite Rotary Flight was stationed at Kohat consisting of Jet Ranger and Mi-17. Later two more Pumas were despatched from Qasim Base in support of 11 Corp. The initial steps of Pakistan were monitoring the porous frontier (passes) to observe the infiltration of Taliban; establishing and reinforcing posts at passes to check this inflow. There are no less than 92 passes in Balochistan alone in south and over 18 passes in Chitral alone in north; overall Pakistan shares a 2500 Kilometres long border (Durand Line) with Afghanistan. 9 Squadron 'Muhammadis' under Lieutenant Colonel Khalil Dar (he later commanded Army Aviation 2014-2016) was the mainstay of all aviation efforts, coordinating among them and more importantly providing administrative and logistic supports to crew. Major (Late) Imtiaz of 27 Squadron narrated, 'We were at Peshawar, the corps headquarters after carrying out aerial reconnaissance would ask us to drop the infantry troops at prescribed heights to block the routes of infiltration. All such posts were established with the help of Army Aviation. Till a certain height the infantry troops would come on vehicles but to reach the heights would involve time. The tops were all covered with snow; thus essential rationing was also heli-transported to them'. (Major Imtiaz embraced martyrdom in a Mi-17 crash at Burzil Pass while on an operational mission in 2003).

Chitral in north forms the northern edge of Durand Line and runs south over the watershed, area is green and mountainous , Tirch Mir (7600 meters) is the highest in the region. Chitral was a former princely state, the Chitral Scouts were raised in 1903, the main forts are at Drosh, Mir Kani , Chitral and Mastuj. There is a fair weather air strip at Chitral with daily turbo propeller aircraft flights to Peshawar. In winter Chitral is physically cut off from the rest of country due to heavy snow fall at Lowari. Khyber Valley comprises of Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber political agencies, this is the most densely populated area of FATA. The valley or bowl is bordered by the western mountain range which for all practical purpose is an Afridi ridge and

valley. Tirah at 6000 feet in the north –west , acts as the geographical pivot of the area; Koh Safeed at 18000 feet forms the western edge of Pakistan's frontier. These were the areas which became the focussed areas in the winter of 2001.

Simultaneously on 13th December 2001, Indian Lok Saba was subjected to a heinous terrorist attack for which India as usual blamed Pakistan. By end December 2001, India had brought its armed forces on the border; a Nuclear War became imminent in the sub-continent. Pakistan now faced a two pronged threat on its Eastern and Western borders. The operation to counter the Indian threat was code named as ' Operation Labbaik'. Although both countries remained short of a full fledged war yet the tempers were so high on both sides that it could have started at any moment. India lost its nerves and finally backed off, Army Aviation Groups moved back to peace location on 7th March 2002. Corps Composite Squadrons remained deployed in the field for another two months.

Operation Al Mizan was the Pakistan Army's response to the militancy in the tribal areas and all military operations with different names were carried out under the broad umbrella of Operation Al Mizan.

Pakistan Army after securing the borders with India was able to fully concentrate on western borders .The foreign terrorists after fleeing from Afghanistan sought sanctuary in the border area of South Waziristan near Wanna. Army Aviation support in the form of one flight of helicopters was in action since 2001.This Flight remained at Kohat and pilots were circulated after certain time period. Aviation efforts were primarily utilised in establishing of blocking positions, shifting of troops, dumping in remote areas and evacuation of casualty apart from aerial reconnaissance.

Combat Group was extensively used in the early stages with both the squadrons moving out to the Western border. 33 Combat Squadron was deployed at Quetta where-as 31Combat Squadron with its two Cobras and two Jet Rangers was at Kohat. Major Khattak of 31 Squadron was sent to Kohat on 12th December 2001, mainly because he belongs to that area and had flown before, he recalls, ''I flew with the divisional commander and showed him all the valleys and routes coming from Afghanistan. We saw the people coming in from across the Durand Line. During one of the reconnaissance mission we also saw B-52 Bombers dropping their loads. In another sortie I flew few miles across the Durand Line ,I saw a detachment of Afghan troops digging their positions, they waved at me and I replied accordingly''.

At Kohat , 33 Combat Squadron was task to keep the numerous passes under observation. Major Khattak narrates one such flying sortie .' I had taken off from Kohat with general officer commanding and my flying crew chief on board, we flew overhead Parachinar and as I gained the altitude , I could feel the effects of low oxygen, I immediately put my Jet ranger in descend when my crew chief announced that he is going out for a walk'. This is the effect of low oxygen, the sense becomes impaired. In another related incident , on 29th October 2002, Captain Asghar Bangash alongwith GOC 9 division while approaching the helipad for landing at Daburri near

Hangu experienced an inflight emergency in which helicopter (Jet Ranger III) started turning viciously, it made three circles before Captain Asghar was able to auto rotate it and came out of the helicopter alongwith his crew without any harm.

At Quetta, the first irritant was the cold weather which played its role; the commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Waseem narrates ‘ at times the Cobras would refuse to start in the morning, it was a major irritant , as no cause was identified. After few days of flying a pattern was identified in which the Cobras would not start early in the morning but after an hour if sun is there they would start up. Thus with the help of the maintenance crew we identified the root cause, it was the pipes of the cobra which were the main cause of this delay in start up.’. Former commanding officer further narrates that ‘ it was our first time to fly at such altitude in an operational envoirnment thus the controls and their effects were sluggish and different from what my pilots were used to in their flying career’.

Tactically the concept of Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) which was initiated by Major General Azam , GOC Army Aviation and Major General Alvi, GOC of SSG in the early days of the operations (2002-2003) matured with every passing operation. Concept was anchored in the close cooperation among the two elite arms, army aviation and SSG to such a degree that that they should function as a single entity

State passed the orders to annex those areas in tribal areas which had no government representation and establish the writ of the government effectively so that there is no chance of hiding the terrorists in these areas. There were three main inaccessible areas in North Waziristan Agency e.g Dwatoi alongwith Tochi Pass, Alwara Mandi alongwith Kazha Valley and Bangidar in the north. Three prong operations were planned simultaneously by Tochi Scouts in December 2001 coupled with Political Administration North Waziristan Agency. By end January 2002 all the three areas were occupied successfully without a single casualty which was a great achievement for the unit as well as for the government. A wing from Shawal Rifles and Kurram Militia each also participated in the operations. Pakistan flag was hoisted on all the three points with a proper ceremony in which locals were also invited. Tochi Scouts established the posts in the Dwa Toi, Khara Wara, Gharlamai and Bajawari. Alwara Mandi, Kunar Sar, Adami Kot and Ismail Khel, Bangidar and Hassan Khel. Apart from other senior officers, the Vice Chief of Army Staff General Yousaf Khan also visited the areas in 2002 and appreciated the efforts made by Tochi Scouts.

Next four years till 2005, majority of the operations involving Army Aviation took place in North and South Waziristans supporting 7 and 9 Infantry Divisions, Tochi Scouts and South Waziristan Scouts of Frontier Corps.

North Waziristan Agency (NWA) is inhabited by Wazir as the major tribe along with Dawar and Saidgai tribes. It comprises of three sub divisions and nine tehsils, it covers an area of 4,707 square kilometres. Afghanistan is on the west, Kurram Agency in north and Bannu and Karrak on the east, Miranshah is the administrative capital of the political agency. There are

two Militia corps namely Tochi Scouts with its headquarters at Miranshah and Shawal Rifles which is located at Razmak. Militancy erupted in the agency in July 2005,

South Waziristan Agency is in the south. Largest political agency among the seven agencies with an area of 6,620 square Kilometres. Major tribes include Mahsud, Ahmedzai Wazir (Wana), Bhittani (Jandola) Burki (Kaniguram) and Dotani (Zhob). Agency is administratively divided into three sub divisions namely Sarawaki, Laddha and Wana. Militant groups include Moulvi Nazir group of Wana and Tehreek Taliban Pakistan. Counter militant operations started from this agency in 2001 onwards

On 8th August 2002, a mission was received by Headquarters Aviation Command to support 9 Division. Infantry Division had intelligence reports of 60-70 armed operatives residing in an isolated double storey hut located at the northern edge of village Main Toi. Plan was to cordon the area and then search the village. Eight helicopters (three MI-17,four Puma, one Jet Ranger) were earmarked for this operation.

Army Aviation had to heli lift a company size force of 71 Punjab Regiment with heavy weapons from Wanna and drop them on heights overlooking the target, an aerial command post for divisional commander was also established. One Puma helicopter armed with two machine guns was to provide the aerial combat support. During the planning phase, the sites for landing were selected off the map. At last moment, intelligence officer revealed that latest reports have confirmed that target is in village Shingi approximately four Kilometers north of previous site. Fresh planning was carried out and aerial reconnaissance was also conducted. Bad weather on 9th August prevented aviation elements from reaching Wanna. However on 10th August 2002, all helicopters along with the tactical headquarters comprising Brigadier Arif Nazir and Lieutenant Colonel Pervaiz Butt reached Wanna.

On the morning of 10th August 2002, police, militia and infantry moved from Wanna and established inner cordon around village Shingi. At 1230 hours one Jet Ranger and two Pumas carried out aerial reconnaissance of the target .At 1300 hours seven helicopters started lifting the infantry company along with 75 millimeter recoilless rifle from Wanna and dropped them on pre –reconnoitered sites around the target area. The force was heli-lifted in three trips. The ground troops started the search and after pitch battle, few foreigners started fleeing from the target area. Puma helicopter was in air to monitor the operation. At 1800 hours the operation was terminated and all troops were again heli-lifted from the target area.

Helicopters remained at Wanna and on 11th August 2002 they took off at 1500 hours for Qasim Base. One Puma helicopter No.1528 piloted by Major Asad Mujahid and Captain Satti while taking off from Wanna made a hard landing and sustained substantial damage.

Pilots who participated in this operation Lieutenant Colonels Shahid Nazir, Irfan Ahmed, Sabah Ud Din. Majors Naeem Khattak, Masood Akhtar, Ashfaq Rehman, Irfan Warraich, Ikram Ul Haq, Sajjad Ehsan, Waqas Niazi, Mujahid Asad, Captains Satti,Abdul Rahim and Ehsan

Masood. Total of 57 hours were flown and 438 troops were lifted. The Tactical Headquarter comprised of Brigadier Arif Nazir, Lieutenant Colonels Pervaiz Butt and Roghani. Clerks included Rashim Khan and Nawaz Ahmed.

Raising of 50 Border Security Patrol (BSP) Squadron (11th November 2002)

In view of the terrorist threats and other linked problems on the Western border, 50 BSP Squadron comprising newly inducted Huey helicopters and Caravan aircraft was raised under Ministry of Interior. Brigadier Muhammad Shafiq Awan was made in-charge of the BSP setup. 50 BSP Squadron was raised by Colonel Shahid Sardar, Lieutenant Colonel Hafiz Nasir was given the command of Rotary Flight and Major Masood later promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel was commanding Fixed Wing Flight. Officers were selected to undergo flying training at Cessna Factory, Florida. The pioneer pilots of Caravan are. Majors Masood, Abid Jamil, Mian Javed Yasin, and Captains included Haroon Ansar, Nadeem Khan, Naveed Anwar, Ali Azad, Tahir Kayani and Shahzad Farooq . Pilots had a good experience at America, despite all the misgivings about security environments prevailing there especially with regards to Muslims. One of the instructor at Cessna was none other than Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Abdul Rasheed "Rasheedi."Caravan was ferried by American pilots to Pakistan.

Major retired Tahir Kayani highlights 'we had a good training at USA, on arrival back the Caravans landed at Samungli and immediately the PAF took over the ownership of them. This confusion lasted for well over two months. Mr Peter was our instructor an American well in his fifties, an excellent flyer. Our flying training syllabus within the squadron was formulated by him basing upon the American standards. We flew extensively; our mission was to keep the western borders under surveillance for anti-narcotics purpose also. Baluch drivers on smuggling routes in the desert are too good for any regular military or para military drivers thus our presence in the air made a huge difference. We carried out very extensive night missions lasting well over three hours at a stretch.'

Operation Tight Noose-2nd October 2003. Angoor Adda

In Wanna, the situation and local people were still not hostile, own SSG persons would go to bazaar in civil dress and buy the usual items. The local intelligence network of tribes is quite efficient and they soon pick the routine of military. There were usual movement between the Wanna and Islamabad in connection with American trainers, there were vehicles provided by American with dark glasses that would roam between the two cities. One day Captain Naveed of 3 Commando was approached by a local tribesman , ' I was walking in the bazaar, when he approached me and call me by rank, and offering a handsome amount of money, so that his own vehicles can ply with us , he was a smuggler but it highlights the kind of intelligence these people have'. He further highlights that, 'we were wearing the uniform of Frontier Corps, I somehow had the uniform of a naik rather than that of an officer.

This was the first major operation against terrorist undertaken by Army Aviation in Waziristan Agency. The target area was located few kilometres south west of Angoor Adda,

Cobra

Mi-17

Puma

Bell 412

Army Aviators getting ready for takeoff during operations

refueling in the field

Cobras

Wanna, Cobra and Mi 17

close to Durand Line and north west of Wanna .Two valleys approach the target area namely Niza Algad and Manta Algad. The preparation for this operation started in August 2003 and Exercise Fox Hunt was the training for this operation. Lessons and short comings felt during the Fox Hunt were overcome in the preceding time . Crew from squadrons were collected at Qasim Base. Details of operation were not disseminated to the crew due to secrecy but squadron commanders were alerted well in time.

The main emphasis was on formation flying. It was carried out both in day and night. Night training was paramount as the operation was envisaged in hours of darkness. Extensive night flying employing night vision goggles were carried out .It initially came as surprise to the residents of Rawalpindi to hear the helicopter noise in hours of darkness but gradually this noise became part of the daily life. The most invaluable was the aerial reconnaissance of the target area on 6th September 2003, provided to all Aviation Squadron Commanders. Entire mission was simulated repeatedly at similar areas. Imageries of the area along with weather details were frequently updated.

Another reconnaissance was conducted for establishing of forward base in three sectors namely Razmak-Wanna, other being Thal-Spinwan-Mir Ali- Miram Shah- Khajuri and Sanwakai-Jandola- Tank. In the end Jandola and Miram Shah were earmarked .

Target area consisted of few scattered compounds located approximately 2 kilometers south of confluence of Niza Algad and Manta Algad Valleys. The only approach to the target area forms a stretch of 4-6 kilometers of undulating and broken area littered with Pine trees at the confluence. Field elevation is 6500-7500 feet, surrounded by mountains ranging from 8000-10,000 feet. Average temperature in the area is 15-35 degrees Celsius. Reportedly a group of 30-35 foreigner terrorists supported by locals were based here .They were carrying out the terrorist activities not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan.

The very first operation of newly raised SOTF was conducted six Kilometres south of Wanna at Bagar Cheena area. The operation was a well coordinated and based upon intelligence reports,, highlighting the presence of over thirty hard-core Taliban; however the exact figure of the Taliban was not confirmed. Karrar Company for the operation constructed a model village in Tarbela , to depict the target and for well over two months extensive training was carried out. ‘ we carried out a deep planning and rehearsed the likely unfolding of events , to an extent that we could predict that at such and such precise moment, the target would be exposing his left shoulder to the sniper’. Reconnaissance of the target had commenced on 20th August, another reconnaissance was carried out very next day. During the reconnaissance phase the commandos were shown the houses and the compound to be attacked.

First Attempt, 4th September 2003

On this date Aviation Force along with Special Services Group comprising 14 helicopters with one Y-12 as stand by at Qasim Base flew to Bannu at dusk where last minute co ordination

and planning was conducted. Before first light the helicopters took off in varying formations. The weather turned bad and all formations entered clouds. The valley was narrow and on both side of the flight path were high mountains. Major Kayani of Combat Group was flying the Cobra and he vividly remembers, "There was no contact with the lead helicopter, I glued onto the instruments and maintained heading" His namesake Lieutenant Colonel Kayani was flying the MI-17 helicopter and he had the similar experience. Brigadier Rashid the Base Commander was flying a Lama helicopter but there was nothing, which he could do at that time. The mouth of the valley is narrow and not more than two formations can enter together. The follow up formations took up holding position and waited for the clearance from lead formation. This spell remained for some time and wisely pilots forced landed at suitable areas and waited for the weather to get clear. It was a miracle supported by the extensive training which saved the day.

Next attempt was made on following day but again bad weather (dust storm) forced the helicopters to abort the mission.

Air Assault

These abortive missions were a blessing in disguise as they helped in overcoming the shortcomings observed. On 1st October 2003 a formation of four MI-17 and one Puma picked up ninety two commandoes from Tarbela and dropped them at Mianwali.Four Cobras and one MI-17 helicopter along with maintenance crew also reached Mianwali from Multan.

On the night of first and 2 October 2003, Special Services Group and infantry moved from Wanna and Anghoor Adda through Niza Algad valley. They reached the target area at around 0430 hours and established a cordon. Naib Subedar Muhammad Akhtar then a naik narrates 'for well over two months we practised the new drills and tactics at Wanna,, it included boarding and getting gown from helicopter in a tactical manner, laying of cordon and assaulting the mud compounds, daily there were classes in which we were given lessons , by using blackboards and then practising what has been taught…there was a great anticipation among all of us, we were looking forward to see the action . We were organised into assault teams rather than platoons

At 0430 hours 2 October 2003, Alpha Formation comprising two Cobras and one MI-17 took off from Mianwali for Wanna, followed by Bravo Formation of three MI-17, one Puma helicopter with 90 Commandoes of SOTF on board. This formation landed at target area at 0615 hours. Meanwhile Cobras of Alpha Formation had already landed at Wanna and were waiting for the orders. The Special Operation Task Force (SOTF) commander immediately after landing asked for the Cobras, which responded and opened fire at the target area. These Cobras engaged the target area round the clock and kept replenishing from Wanna.

Within our company Sepoy Qaiser was leading the prayers. In the morning we were informed about a likely operation at night. After Isha prayers we all mounted the vehicles. Havildar

Brig Taqi Maj Gen Azam Brig Rashid Brig Inam Brig Tahir Brig Javed

Lt Col Tahir (Maj Gen Retd)

Lt Col Anjum (Brig Retd)

33 Squadron 2006

Lt Col Raza Farooq

SILVER JUBILEE MARK & COL OF THE SQN INSTL CEREMONY
9 ARMY AVIATION SQUADRON - 3/4 DEC 2006

Left to Right

Sitting Row : Brig(R) M M Karim, Brig Tariq Hussain, Lt Col Sajjad, Maj gen Javed Aslam Tahir, Lt Gen Mohammed Hamid (Comd 11 Corps), Brig Nasir Mehmood, Maj Gen Waqar kingravi, Brig(R) Ghulam Jabbar, Brig Ameer Khan

Second Row : Lt Col Cheema, Maj Rizwan, Lt Col Sohail, Lt Col Zaheer, Col Alamgir, Lt Col(R) ....., Col(R) Qasim, Capt(R) Faheem, Col Afridi, Lt Col Sabah, Lt Col Khalid, Col Mehmood, Lt Col Arshad, Lt Col Amir

Third Row : Maj Rizwan ....., Maj Rizwan....., Lt Col(R) Asim, Lt Col Abrar, Lt Col Bangash, Capt(R) Rehan, Maj Nasr, Maj Nizam, Maj....., Lt Col Qaiser, Maj Javed, Maj Zaeem, Maj Naveed, Maj.....

Lt Col Asif Jah (Brig Retd)

Lt Col Shahid Nazir

Liaqat was our assault team leader, it required two vehicles for one team. We reached our designated target area at 0400 hours, it was a moonless night. We walked from our debussing point towards the target, each team would occupy its designated area and then informed through wireless about its in position. The target itself,a mud house compound, had a snmall garden or orchard in front, as soon as we reached the orchard the first fire came upon us from the watch towers. My team took cover behind a broken wall and returned the fire. Kararr team in the meanwhile had reached the walls of the compound , scaled it and were inside the compound.

At dawn, the commandos were able to see the whole area of operation, there were trenches in the orchards from which occasional fire was brought upon the commandos. ‘ we shot , one Taliban who was firing on us from the bunker, there was still one man who was causing nuisance for my team. At noon Karrar company carried out the assault, six terrorists were killed in the encounter, at the same time, the encircled terrorist tried to break the cordon by firing and running. Sepoy Qaiser was quite nearby, he was the first one to get the fatal bullet from the terrorist, Qaiser died on the spot. We also killed the running terrorist. The sporadic firefight continued till the evening, after Maghrib prayers, operation was called off and Karrar company was ordered to clear the area, it was during this phase that Sepoy Ishtaiq was hit by a bullet and he embraced martyrdom. In the end two terrorist were captured alive, one of them hailed from Sheikupura{Punjab}. Later at night we marched back to a predesignated place, an infantry battalion had established the outer cordon, we had meal with them , and slept a little.

During this operation the first ever operational TOWs were fired. Major Khattak and Major Kayani were the crew members. Major Khattak narrates. “The target was a compound designated as target No.5.It was a strong point at an elevation of 5500 feet and terrorist were firing from this point. Hovering fire was not possible, Major Kayani the gunner had never fired the TOW before. I made the first run over the target at 150 feet above ground level and opened up the cannons and in next run, at 700-800 meters away from the target, Major Kayani fired the TOW which hit the main complex, and desired results were achieved.” In the same operation one Cobra suffered compressor stall and made emergency landing, later it was rectified and crew flew it back to Wanna.Four MI-17 of Bravo Formation after dropping their load, flew to Wanna, and waited for any impromptu requirements. They were later utilised to heli- lift 70 troops before last light from Wanna to target area. That night four Cobras, two MI-17 and one Puma remained at Wanna whereas two MI-17 and one Puma remained at Bannu.

The compounds and villages in Waziristan are different in design and layout from the standard villages of Punjab , Sind and other parts of frontier. They are made of mud , thus the rocket launchers for all practical purpose losses their lethality. Walls itself are twenty feet and higher, a compound is in fact a family house in which all members of an extended family live together, having different mudhouses inside the compound, these rooms are interlink, have narrow door and an occasional window. For army or SSG it was not a difficult task to simply raze the mud compound , or bring an artillery round, but it was the concern for the safety of the women and children which prompted such elaborate preparation and caution.

On 3rd October 2003 combing and sanitization of the target area was carried out. Cobras were again called to engage the targets. By 0900 hour operation was successfully completed and by 1000 hours 170 Special Services Group troops were de-inducted by the Army Aviation helicopters. Later one Puma and two MI-17 were utilised for the transportation of the prisoners. A total of 139 flying hours were generated and 400 troops were helilifted

Pilots who participated in this operation included Colonel Shahid Sardar.Lieutenant Colonels Shahid Nazir, Abid Saeed,Adil Shahzad,Anwar Iqbal,Asif Jah, Majors were Chanzeb, Rizwan, Umar, Qasim, Sohail, Khattak, Nabeel, Mazhar, Tariq, Ehsan, Babar, Nadeem Kiani, Khalid, Farrukh, Raja Khalid, Waqas, Khusro. Captains included Shams, Arsalan, Kashif, Imran, Sarfraz, and Ansar,

Operation Thunder Storm-2003

On 4th October 2003 another operation was under taken in northern areas in Tangir Valley to flush out the terrorists. Target was located east of River Tangir, sited on a flat ridge, which remains obscured from ground till one climbs up the ridge. It was a complex of mud huts, bunkers and firing range located at an altitude of 2000 meters, surrounded by mountains ranging from 3000-3500 meters. Only one helicopter can approach and exit the valley at one time.

One infantry brigade, Frontier Corps Wing and troops of Force Command Northern Area moved from Gilgit to Sazin. Special Services Group troops were located at Pattan, these were to establish the cordon around the target area and carry out search operation by first light 3rd October 2003. 14 helicopters including seven MI-17, two, Alouettes, one Lama and four Huey -2 were to drop air borne reserve force of 78 SSG troops in the target area, provide aerial fire support, causality evacuation and de induction of troops.

Major Khalid Amir Rana and Major Tariq Butt of 8 Squadron carried the first reconnaissance with Commander FCNA and SSG on board. Major Rana narrates," We took off from Gilgit in a pair and entered the narrow valley. As per our routine flying while going from Qasim to Gilgit at times we used to make this short cut, so locals were used to helicopter flying once in two month times otherwise this area was hardly ever flown. In order to maintain the surprise, we flew at normal altitude and I pointed out the target area to the commanders, I intentionally slowed the helicopter, to give more time to commanders to make the plan."

On 3rd October 2003, the SSG troops were heli-lifted from Cherat to Qasim and subsequently at Gilgit and Jaglot by 1730 hours. There were four Huey at Pattan, while four MI-17 were at Jaglot, three MI-17 were at Gilgit along with two Alouettes and lone Lama.

There was no resistance from the target area and as such no action took place. Later aviation effort was utilised for de-induction of the troops.

Pilots who participated in this operation were from 27,5,8 and 50 Squadron. They included, Lieutenant Colonels Nouman Ghafoor, Babar Adil Shahzad, Pervaiz Butt. Majors were

Nadeem Ghous, Qaiser, Altaf, Khusro, Ehsan, Aftab, Nisar, Riazat, Obaid, Jehantab, Shahid Saeed, Khalid Rana, Tufail and Tariq. Captains. Javed, Arsalan, Sameer, Adil, Shams, Bilal, and Mansoor

General Officer Commanding Aviation Major General Azam along with Base Commander Brigadier Rashid and Colonel Shahid Sardar remained in air to monitor the operation

Between October 2001 to October 2003 Army Aviation generated a total of 66,930 flying hours and executed 6869 missions in 2002 and 4198 missions in 2003.In war against terror Army Aviation from 10th October 2001-10th October 2003 transported a total of 2548 troops and 1,32,545 kilogram of load and flew 1660 hours.Four TOW were fired along with 2200 rounds of 20 mille meter cannon apart from Two Rockets.

Induction of Refurbished Cobras and Raising of Air Mustangs

In 2004, American offered Pakistan Army Aviation twenty Cobras, however these were not the new Cobras rather they were refurbished. In November 2005, a Pakistani team headed by Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Jalil (later brigadier), along with Major Nabeel Khan ex 31 Squadron, a maintenance test pilot on Cobra, arrived at New York and later flown to Puerto Rico where the Cobras were being refurbished. This was the visual inspection team, it also included Major Suhail Zafar (Brigadier now) along with two technicians, one for the armament and other for airframe. Puerto Rico is the poorest among all American states. The system in America is such that the civilian contractors are hired to refurbish the Cobras and then to transport them to the designated country. The company Dyna Corps was responsible for Pakistani Cobras, they had chosen Puerto Rico for the sole reason that labour is much cheap here as compared to other states. It was an old naval base Aguidlla, where the factory was located, just on the other side of the airport. Colonel Rutherford an American officer also accompanied the team to Puerto Rico and later a liaison officer was also appointed to help the Pakistani team. Team stayed for five days, they were allowed to have only visual inspection and no ground run was permitted during this inspection. During this short stay, the team found no less than one hundred and eighty odd entries in the papers related to the Cobra, only one Cobra serial number 021 was inspected. There were discrepancies in the hours logged and similar queries.

In May 2006, the same team flew back to Puerto Rico via New York, a flight of two and half hours. The team had to inspect not only visually but also carry out air tests of eight Cobras within a time period of 48 days. There were two American crew members also among whom one was a pilot and had instructor rating on Cobra, both were US Army retired persons. Each Cobra had to be first visually inspected then given a ground run for 40 minutes and later its performance checked in flying manoeuvres lasting well over an hour by Major Nabeel and the American pilots overhead the field. As per the American rules, a Cobra IP cannot carry out Maintenance Test pilot's duties; their currency lasts for sixty days. It was a meticulous task; every day there new entries being made and it compelled the company to hire some crew and technicians again to remove these entries. Every week a report was sent to the General

headquarters on the progress, ultimately it took 148 days for the acceptance of eight Cobras. Two Cobras were painted in camouflage and remaining were done in the already existing colour scheme of Cobras. These Cobras were air lifted through a C-5 and delivered at Chaklala airport from where they were flown to Qasim base. In the next batch Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen and Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Jalil again reached Puerto Rico in mid May 2007 for the acceptance of remaining Cobras. Pakistan also bought few Cobras as spare birds, they are crashed helicopters but they are useful for training of technicians.

In the meantime, in June 2006, an American team visited Multan Base to carryout feasibility study of conducting NVG training for Pakistani pilots at Multan Base. Another team comprising of members from Northrop Grumman visited the base for the upgrading of avionics in Cobra. Another important transition was the change of command in the Combat Group, Brigadier Khalid Mahmood took over the command from Brigadier Muhammad Tahir; Brigadier Khalid was not qualified on Cobra thus he had to undergo a conversion cadre from 10-29 July 2006 which he qualified. This was the second time in the history of Cobras that commander had to undergo a conversion cadre.

An induction ceremony for the refurbished Cobra helicopters was held on 2nd February at Qasim Base in which the American Ambassador Patterson handed over the helicopters to Major General Taqi Rizvi Director General Army Aviation. On 16th February 2007 another ceremony was held at Multan Base in which Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal was the chief guest, he was commanding the corps at Multan. Keys of Cobra helicopters were handed over to Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tehseen and Lieutenant Colonel Ejaz Ahmed. In April 2007, Vice Chief of Army Staff General Ahsan Saleem Hayat visited the Combat Group and witnessed the first firing of these refurbished Cobras. 7 TOWs, 28 rockets and 300 rounds of cannon were fired with acceptable results.

Operation Kalosha. January 2004

Operation Kalosha was another operation carried out in Wanna (South Waziristan Agency), It was conducted on 7th January 2004. Primary aim was search of foreign militants in five mud compounds, intelligence reports had highlighted the presence of 40-50 foreign militants. The standard standing procedures now evolved includes an outer cordon by an infantry and inner cordon by commando battalion and finally the search and clearance by the Karrar. After encirclement of the compounds, announcement was made on speakers about the intention, thus all women and children (25 in number) came out and stayed in open. Artillery and Cobra fire was brought upon the compounds at 0930 hours. At 1100 hours the search and clearance stared and was over by 1330 hours. 'Although the operation met no success but it was a good real time exercise and the unit and sub units were able to practice their drills and procedures in actual environment'.

With the experience of previous air assault operations, the importance of weather became paramount for the success of aviation assets in Kalosha.The area of operation was bounded by

the Line Miranshah-Bannu in the north/north east, Tank in south and Durand Line in the west. Target was located in the general area Kalosha and Shin Warsak approximately 10 kilometers west of Wanna.

By this stage few aviation assets were permanently placed at Mianwali Base for any urgent requirement and rest of the crew and helicopters would be called up from Qasim, Multan and Quetta at short notice. All operational planning was conducted by the Military Operation Directorate which was attended by staff officers from Aviation Command and on receipt of their orders the Aviation would start planning. Training was conducted continuously. Pilots at Mianwali were circulated after certain time period. Bannu was also established as a forward base with Forward Area Arming and Refuelling Company. Shortage of crew and pilots remained a sore point. At the need of hour crew would be mustered from all over Pakistan but this had a short coming in terms of crew co-ordination, but there was no immediate answer to this.

On 7th January 2004, all pilots and helicopters were mustered at Qasim Base.Mobile phones were of great help in getting the crew, like Lieutenant Colonel Adil Shahzad was driving near Mandra when he got the General Officer Commanding call on his cellphone to cancel his leave and report to Qasim Base. A total of 23 helicopters including nine MI-17,five Puma,six Cobras, two Alouette and one Lama were earmarked for this operation along with 210 Special Services Group troops. Necessary information and imageries of target area were provided by the Military Operation Directorate well in time.

This force was heli-lifted by seven MI-17 and five Puma helicopters to Mianwali Base by 1800 hours 7th January 2004.Six Cobra helicopters also arrived at Mianwali Base before last light. In the mean while 3 FAAR company moved from Multan and established Forward Area Arming and Refuelling Point (FAARP) at Bannu by 0800 hours, on 8th January 2004.The night of 7th /8th January was spent for marrying up and arming the helicopters, meanwhile additional requirement came from 9 Division to heli-lift 60 combat troops from Razmak to Wanna and another 130 troops from Miram Shah to Wanna.

Operation Commences

By first light the ground troops cordoned the target area. Helicopters got airborne at 0700 hours. The formation was led by attack helicopters for route clearance. The force reached Wanna, one officer from 9 Squadron was stationed at Wanna for air traffic controlling and co-ordination. Pilots were briefed by the ground commanders on the conduct of operation. Later five MI-17 and four Puma helicopters took off for Razmak and Miram Shah to heli-lift the additional force. At 0915 hours General Officer Commanding 9 Infantry Division and Brigadier Shoukat Sultan Commander 116 Brigade were flown to the target area.

At 0930 hours the attack helicopters were called by the ground commander for fire support. These Cobras then remained in air till 1500 hours. Lieutenant Colonel Raza Farooq and Captain Khawar made the first engagement from Cobra. Later Major Hameed and Major Butt and then Major Asim, Major Zahid and Major Farrukh engaged the target.

At 1615 hours the operation was called off and all helicopters less one Alouette flew back to Mianwali. Later on 9th January 2004 all Aviation helicopters flew back to Qasim Base at 1700 hours.

Pilots who participated in this operation were.Brigadier Raashid,Commander Qasim Base, Colonel Nadeem Aslam, Lieutenant Colonels Noman Ghafoor, Adil Shahzad, Raza Farooq, Mumtaz Zia, Shahid Nazir and Pervaiz Butt; Majors were Safdar, Rehan,Imran,Fazal, Qazi, Hameed, Amir Raza, Umar Farooq, Sohail,Nadeem Ghous, Tanveer, Bilal Sarwar,Nadeem Sadiq, Asim,Butt, Chanzeb Jadoon, Nayab Khan, Humayun, Amir Peerzada, Jehanzeb, Asim,Hameed, Zahid, Farrukh, Anjum, Kamal, Imran and Altaf, Captains Kamran, Zubair, Khawar,Solat,Anser,Kashif and Mehtab.

A total of 180 hours were flown consuming 80,000 litres of fuel, lifting 653 troops and 685 rounds of cannon were fired.

Operation Zerakai. February 2004

The biggest operation conducted so far against the anti state elements involving thirty three helicopters including sixteen MI-17,five Puma, six Cobras ,three Huey, one Lama, and One Alouette. It was conducted on 23rd /24th February 2004 in an area 12 kilometres South West of Wanna. The target area was a complex of 5-6 mud walled huts located in the foot hills of a valley.

Operation Zarkai -23rd February 2004. An operation almost similar to the two previous operations, basing upon the intelligence reports of foreign militants present in the area. It was an exclusive SOTF operation and no infantry battalion was employed for the establishment of cordon. Also it was the vey firsrt operation which was Heliborne, all the force was helilifted from Mianwali in three waves. In the first wave, nine MI-17 helicopters airlifted 185 commandos of 3 Commando Battalion to establish an outer cordon; by 0700 hours the target village was easily cordoned without any resistance. The second wave of six Mi-17 helicopters landed near the target area, 115 commandos of Zarrar and Karrar companies were in position by 0730 hours. The announcement was made on loudspeakers, this time lady searchers were also part of the raiding force, in order to ensure that no militant escapes under the veil cover. These lady searchers, Frontier militia , infantry company and political agent arrived at the target area in vehicles. Operation terminated at 1430 hours without any major or worthwhile prize, only two local armed men and four Kazakh women were apprehended. Commandos observation were ‘ intelligence agencies are exaggerating the presence of high value targets and miscreants’.

On 22nd February 2004 a force of 300 Special Services Group troops was concentrated at Qasim Base. Meanwhile all aviation assets were also collected at Qasim. Necessary intelligence and imageries were provided by Military Operation Directorate. On 23rd February by 1800 hours all the helicopters and troops were flown to Mianwali Base. 3 FAAR established FAARP at Wanna and 2 FAAR Company established FAARP at Bannu.

Cobra Pilots 2009
From L-R Capt Fayyaz, Maj Ali Raj, Maj Rehan, Maj Mehtab,Lt Col Ghuman,Maj Bangash

Cobra Pilots 2011 with Lt Col (Brig Retd) Rizwan

Wanna Flight 2011
L-R: Lt Col Rizwan, Maj Raza,Maj Muneer, Maj Kawish, Capt Ali

Raising of 35 Combat Squadron

ARMY AVN CO's CONF - 2011
Brig Khalil Darr
(Maj Gen Retd)
Brig Anjum
(Maj Gen Retd)
Maj Gen Arif Nazir
(GOC)
Maj Gen Janjua
(Lt Gen Retd)

35 Squadron (Col Wajahat Ghuman) 2012

27 Squadron (Lt Col Faizan) 2014

On 24th February 2004, the intended start up time of 0540 hours was delayed by Military Operation Directorate for the want of latest of intelligence report. At 0605 hours the first wave of helicopters carrying 180 troops in nine MI-17 and three Huey took off supported by six Cobra helicopters. This force dropped the troops at target area at 0710 hours. The Hueys and Cobras provided aerial support around the clock for this force. Second wave carrying 120 troops in six MI-17 took off from Mianwali at 0700 hours and landed near target area at 0805 hours. All Cargo Helicopters then flew to Bannu for refueling.

At 1300 hours the ground operation was completed and de-induction of troops started which was completed by 1400 hours. These helicopters then remained standby at Mianwali Base till 29th February. In the same time period another Section consisting seven Special Services Group soldiers was dropped at Miram Shah by Huey on 26th February 2004. Army Aviation flew 257 hours and lifted 337 Troops. Pilots who participated in this operation were

Lieutenant Colonels Sagheer, Asif Jah, Mumtaz Zia,Noman Ghafoor, Abid Saeed, Pervaiz Butt, Majors Basharat Noor, Arsalan, Sajjad, Kayani, Nabeel, Omer Mehdi, Rehan, Khattak, Tariq, Mubbashir, Mazhar, Shahid, Nayyab, Naveed, Satti, Shujaat, Suhail, Altaf, Ahsan, Kafeel, Azam, Hameed, Jehangir,Khalid, Tanveer, Aftab, and Chanzeb Captains.Adil, Ali Abid, Arsalan, Farrukh, Javaid, Solat, Kashif, Imran and Shams

Induction of Bell-412

Twenty Six (26) Bell-412 Helicopters (worth $ 235 Millions) were inducted in Pakistan Army Aviation during 2004-05. First helicopter was handed over on 14 July 2004 and last helicopter was delivered on 10 April 2005. Initially the helicopters were provided on lease for a period of two years. On expiry of lease period, in October 2007 the title of ownership of Bell-412 helicopters was transferred to Pakistan Army on token payment of $ 100 per helicopter in a ceremony at Dhamial. Two more Bell 412 Helicopters were inducted in July 2010 to make up deficiency of crashed Bell-412 Helicopters at the cost of $ 31.6 Million (through US Assistant Package - PCF 09). Since induction, these Bells have been extensively utilized in all types of operations undertaken by Army Aviation especially in war against terror.

Operation at Shakai. June 2004

Operation Shakai-11th June 2004. Operation at Shakai in SWA was a major operation in terms of troops and the helicopters, a wholly SOTF operation, in which 3 Commando and Karrar Company took part, there were 15 MI-17 helicopters, supported by four Cobra gunships and a UH-2 helicopter acting as aerial command post.

As the helicopters came in for landing, they were fired upon, thus one Mi-17 with two combat teams of Karrar had to divert to Wanna from where the combat teams were later dropped at evening. The maximum fire was coming from the northern ridge{ pt9715}, this was unexpected development, teams had to sent to eliminate this menace, which they did successfully. There was one 14.5 mm single barrel gun which was causing all this havoc, after

the ridge was overpowered, it was found and deduced that not more than five militants were on the top.

The search and clearance of the compound and the adjoining area revealed nothing as only one vantage rifle .303 was captured alongwith some ammunition. For a more precise destruction of the target area , an air strike was called which came at 1630-1700 hours strafing and bombing the northern ridge line . Troops camped in the near vicinity of the target , during night, illuminating artillery rounds were fired , the militants attempted twice to attack the camp but failed. Next morning (12th June 2004) the day started with own air strike on the compound area and searching and clearing by the Karrar company which they were able to do so by 1500 hours. Meanwhile a link up was established with the 8 Punjab regiment, they now took over the cleared compounds under their control. The SOTF had to spent the night again , on the ridge lines. On 13th June , the ridges were searched again for any miscreant , a single cabin with a 12.7mm gun mounted was located and destroyed. By mid day all 15 compounds were searched and cleared without finding anything worthwhile ; deinduction started at 1430 hours and was successfully completed by 1615 hours. SOTF later realised and stressed that , clearance and search mission should be completed with in a day, irrespective of darkness, rather than spending the night in the target area. Another bitter lesson was that, such operations can last longer than planned, therefore food and other arrangement which includes batteries for the wireless sets should be carried in sufficient numbers.

Operation Tande Obo. August 2004.

Tande Obo a small village on the outskirts of Miranshah, approximately 18 Kilometres north east, having a madrassah was the target. Intelligence reports gave the impression of foreigners being trained in the Madrassah. On 23rd August 2004, SOTF troops were Heli landed short of the target area, a company than secured the landing area, after the experience of previous operations, securing the landing zone became a priority. As usual the outer cordon was established by 3 Commando and Karrar Company carried out the search and clearance of the target. The Karrar assault team was hit by the miscreants' fire resultantly Captain Arshad Iqbal was hit and wounded. Such sporadic fire, retard the speed of the assault teams and allowed the miscreants to make an attempt to escape through the cordon. Miscreants hiding and blending with the ground , were good marksmen , thus two more soldiers of SOTF were wounded, Havildar Niaz Ahmed and Naib Subedar Mir Dad had to be evacuated to safety area. All captured arms and ammunition was destroyed by the SOTF and troops were helilifted from target area and were back in Tarbela by 1930 hours.

Formulation of Combat Doctrine

In August 2004, Brigadier Muhammad Tahir took over the command of Combat Group and Brigadier Pervaiz Sultan was posted out to Inter Service Intelligence (ISI). Brigadier Muhammad Tahir in true sense can be credited with commanding the Combat Group in operations. At this time in history, it was Qasim Base which was coordinating the operations in the tribal areas.

Puma SM

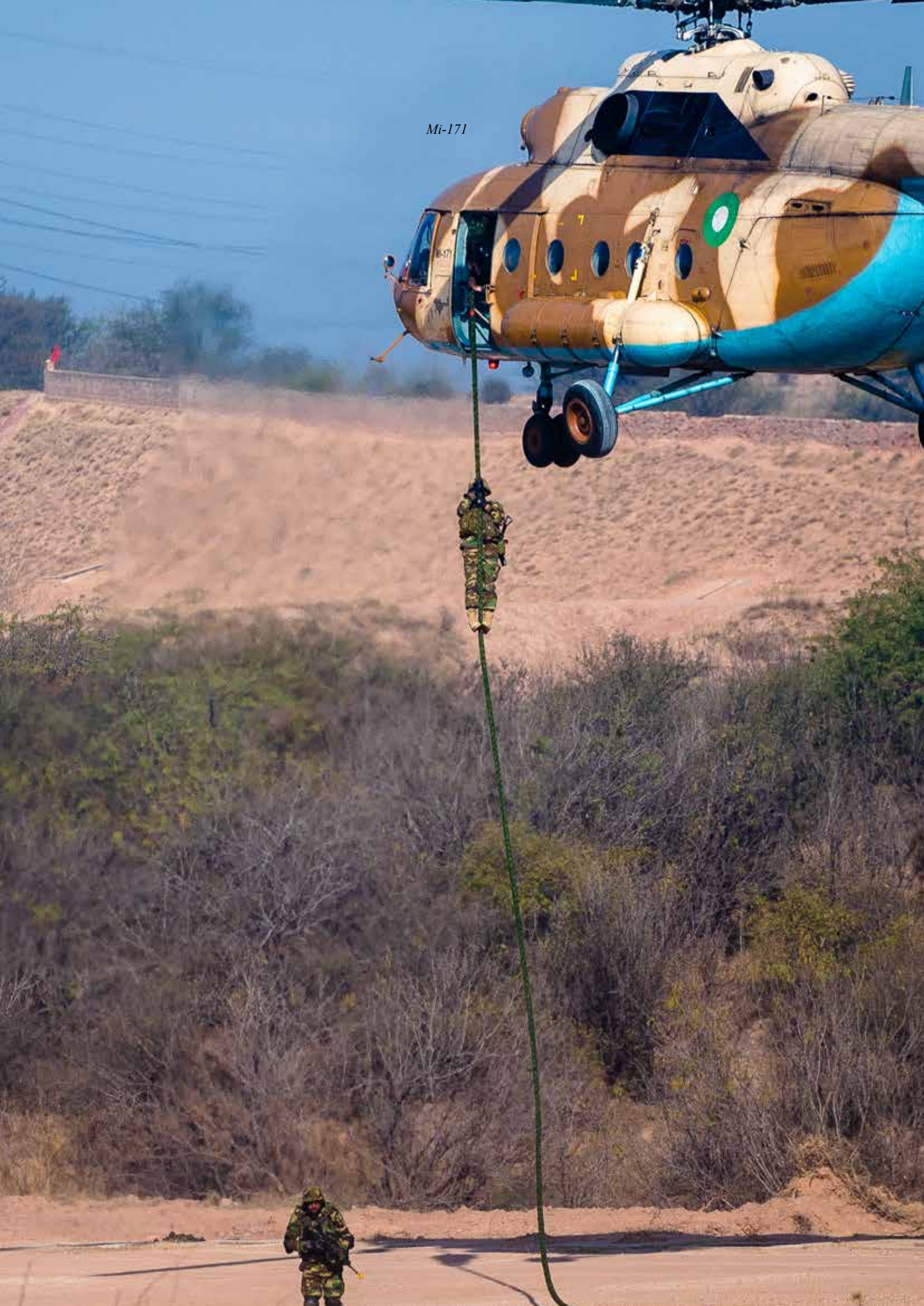
Mi-171

Bell 412

Mi-17

Mi-171

Puma SM


Mi-171

Operations in Balochistan started in December 2005, also the operations in North Waziristan also commenced in earnest in March 2006. Thus, the dynamics of Combat support underwent drastic transition. One key factor was an operational sortie which Brigadier Tahir flew with Lieutenant Colonel Abid Saeed on 14th September 2004. 'I had flown to Mianwali to have a first look at the operations, my pilots and Cobras were deployed there. I am grateful to PAF for providing us with the administrative support but somehow the working culture of army and air force is not in line. They (PAF) had own limitations in accommodating the Cobra pilots and ground crew. In the morning, I observed our crew literally had to wake up at 0330 hours just to use the washrooms. I was supposed to fly on a Jet Ranger to Wana, but at start-up there was a technical entry thus I flew with Lieutenant Colonel Abid in a Cobra to Wana. At that time, the pattern was that pilots and Cobras were placed at Mianwali and were supporting formation at Wana from here and would fall back before sunset. At Wana, there were four Cobras including one in which I had arrived. I after meeting the pilots went to infantry formation and Corps Commander Lieutenant General Safdar also arrived. After operational briefing as we were having a field lunch, a message arrived. A company of a Baloch regiment had been ambushed near Sarwakai'. Town of Sarwakai is on road Wana-Jandola. Brigadier Tahir adhered to 'Spirit of Attack is everything' led the formation and reached the spot. He was in communication with the company commander on ground, the company regained its composure after having four Cobras overhead. The convoy was rescued and Cobra formation flew back to Multan rather than landing at Mianwali.

Apart from the moving of Cobras close to the supported formations, the tactics were also pondered. One safety helicopter was also made part of any operation involving Cobras, Bell 412 or Huey were responsible for not only evacuating crew in case of hit but also started carrying ground commanders on-board. With the passage of time and experience a constant change is always on card in the doctrine. Core issue is the height to be maintained in the operations. Higher altitude of 3000 feet althought ensures protection from ground based weapons but it also hampers the lethality of the Cobars. Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman (2014-2016) had the opinion that Cobras should fly low and at 130 Knots; it leaves very little time of reaction to the militant to aim and fire. Major General Nadeem Yousaf (commanded 31 and 35 Combat Squadrons) held similar views. ' as long as we are not breaking the skyline the safety is not jeopardised'.

Wanna Flight

On 21st October 2004, one Combat Flight ex Air Wolves was move to Wana the rationale behind was to close the time between the action on ground and the reaction time of Cobras. It also saves the precious hours of gunships in ferrying. Major Nasheed Iqbal was the very first flight commander with Majors Abdul Hamid (he was promoted in August 2005 and took over the command of squadron), Shahid Butt, Raja Muhammad Munir, Kashif Farooq and Captain Zubair as other pilots; Captain Zubair received the good news of his daughter being born while carrying out pre-flight of Cobra at Wanna. Flight was accommodated at South Waziristan Scouts fort, where a house was given which pilots aptly name as Cobra House. It was three

room colonial style bungalow. Ground Crew was also provided accommodation to a barrack next to the mosque. Cobras were parked at Zarai Noor Complex which was later named as Javed Sultan Complex. It is worth mentioning that Major General Javed Sultan Khan embraced martyrdom in an air crash during the operation; he was younger brother of Brigadier Pervaiz Sultan Khan (33 Squadron). Wana flight had its first occurrence not in air but on ground; Captain Doctor Sibghat on 18th November 2004, as a matter of good gesture was allowed to sit in the cockpit and resultantly the doctor accidentally blew off canopy arming mechanism. Pilots were rotated at Wana from both squadrons. During winter, it was an uphill task for the ground crew to perform the daily inspection in sub-zero temperature. Missions were passed directly by the formation. Initially there were not much flying, ammunition and spares were ferried through MI-17.

In 2006, the flight was move to Miranshah and another flight was based at Wana. Captain Imaad narrates that when he reported at Wana in winter of 2007, the flight had shifted to a smaller compound within the divisional headquarters. There were not enough mattresses for the crew, being junior most he had to wake up an hour before the others to use the washroom. It was also the tradition that bed tea was made the junior most although there was own mess detachment present. He also admits that this training later made his married life much happier. It was a healthy routine, we would spend the day the idle if there was no mission. Thus, we all look forward to flying. By end 2007, only one Bell and one MFI-17 were at Wana. One evening Captain Sana Bararich (35 Squadron) was so bore with the routine that he convinced Captain Imran Satti of 31 Squadron to go out of fort for a walk ‘ as we approached our fort gate wearing our track suits, the scout sentry looked at us in amazement, but we walked out and after hundred meters there was an apple orchard, six or seven tribesmen with weapons were sitting in a circle, I wished them in Pashtu and they replied in a puzzled manner, I got permission and we both pilots plucked apples, ate some and put others in our pockets for our colleagues. In same leisure manner, we bid the tribesmen khuda hafiz and as a gesture also invited them to visit us in fort and walk back to the sanctuary of fort. There was already an emergency declared by the scouts, a party was getting ready for our rescue. I narrated the whole episode to the Scouts Commandant, who put both of us on mat and highlighted that you two had just walk away from the jaws of death’. In another similar incident Captain Ali Raj drove from JSC to the fort a drive of fifteen odd minutes just to have dinner with a SSG course mate. He narrowly missed being shot by the sentry. Major Nadeem Yousaf (major general) highlights that there was ample time to even prepare for Command and Staff College entrance examination. He further highlights that at that time, Cobras would fly daily to Miranshah early in the morning avoiding direct route over Razmak and after day long operation at Miranshah would either fly out to Kohat or back to Wanna.

Lawara Mandi . January 2005

Lawara Mandi is a small village , 55 Kilometres west of Miranshah, astride the Durand Line. On 14/15th January 2005, a major operation was carried out, no less than 12 MI-17 helicopters having support of four Cobra gunships participated in the operation, 3 Commando Battalion

Bell 412

Gunner in Bell 412

Cobra

Cobra during night flying

Puma S 300

Mi-171

Flight of Bell 412 and Mi-171

Bell 412 in Operational area

and Karrar Company were heli landed in the snow covered area. The one major lesson that had emerged so far from the operations conducted was the requirement and necessity of having a close coordination among the commandos and aviation element. Thus the whole force had spent the night at Qasim Army aviation base , where last minute details were ironed out. The cordon force took off at 0600 hours on 15th January and they established the outer cordon, which started squeezing and finally by 0800 hours it was in position. Karrar Company landed at 0845 hours and immediately started searching the village. It was one of the very first and perhaps the only mission in which American also participated, albeit in a indirect manner. Five American gunships were hovering inside Afghanistan and own four Cobras were inside Pakistan , thus eliminating any chance of any miscreants making good with escape. Seven compounds were cordoned and people ask through loudspeakers to vacate the compound, 'everyone started vacating the house without any retaliating and surrendered peacefully', leaving the women and children, twenty men were apprehended and taken to Bannu. All compounds were then searched but nothing objectionable was found.

By the end of 2004, the focus of operations shifted from South Waziristan to North Waziristan and from July 2005, army took over the operational control of the NWA. Direct Snap Action (DSA) tactics were adopted, which incorporates aviation, swift insertion of commandos through helicopters, close to the target from multiple directions and extrication of force again through helicopters; all within a time period of thirty odd minutes. Direct snap actions were conducted at Dewgar on 4/5th March 2005 and also in vicinity of the border without yielding anything worth mentioning. On 2nd July 2005 a SOTF operation, first time in NWA was carried out in Madda Khel area, eight helicopters took part in it, 120 SSG troops were Heli landed, two Cobras provided aerial cover, however no ammunition was fired by Cobras. Two persons were arrested by the SOTF.

Khatti Killi Operation 29th September – 2nd October, 2005

This was the biggest operation till to date in North Waziristan Agency for the reason that for the first time Army Aviation Cobra attack helicopters and air force was also employed, although their employment was not part of original planning. It was conceived as a minor operation in line with the other operations conducted so far but in the context of the insurgency it attained an importance much more than what it merited. A series of attacks started in August 2005 on the army and FC Posts starting from night 29/30th July when three rockets were fired at MiranShah Fort from behind the Kalanjar Top, one of the rockets landed at the Signals Lines but there was no damage. There was a gap of almost a fortnight before the next attack came on the night of 19/20th August when again three rockets were fired at the Fort, on 4th September, four rockets were fired at the Fort they were RPG-7s and till the night of 22/23 September there were attacks on each night the numbers of rocket fired never exceeded beyond five at one time

Maulvi Sadiq Noor is a young man of mid-thirties (37 years old) who was living and is still residing in a small village by the name of Khatti Killi (also known as Khare Killi among the local and is marked on the map as Khare Killi) which is located almost 15 miles west

of MiranShah on the southern bank of Tochi River in Upper Daur Valley. Sadiq Noor was a confirmed abettor of foreign miscreants; he was collecting funds for them, providing them with training and recuperation facilities. On 16th September 2005 officer commanding military intelligence met director general military intelligence at Peshawar at 1100 hours and go ahead of the operation was given after pondering over the intelligence reports. In the initial briefing it was decided to have Commandant Tochi Scouts as the force commander, with outer cordon being under the command of second in command of 33 FF who would also be responsible for the quick reaction force and blocking positions, one major of Tochi Scouts will be responsible for the inner cordon. The indication of target was the responsibility of the officer commanding military intelligence.

Tochi Scouts had five integral wings additional FC force attached was in the form of one wing from Swat Scouts, one wing from Thall Scouts, one special operations group company and one armoured troop. In terms of artillery apart from own integral field battery one medium battery of Thall Scouts was also placed under command. Out of this artillery firepower, four medium guns were deployed at MiranShah, three field guns were at Wacha Bibi and two were at Baramand. There are two routes leading to the village, one along the main MiranShah – Boya- Datta Khel Road; in this case from Boya Bridge one has to back track almost five miles to reach the village walking along Muhammad Alam Kot, Bastigra Narai and reaching Khatti Killi which is situated in a re-entrant on a higher ground on the banks of Khaizai Algad. House of Sadiq Noor is located further ahead almost a kilometre passing through Dillipuri Village Other route leads from MiranShah- Isha- Thal Piquet and then follow the road leading to the Boya along the southern bank of Tochi River coming across Khozai & Panekzai Villages before encountering Sadiq Noor's compound. Task was simple; to apprehend Sadiq Noor either from his madrassa or from his residence and simultaneously search & demolish the madrasa, arrest or kill the miscreants and if possible to gather intelligence related documents. Intelligence reports confirmed that the compound is not defended by more than fifteen miscreants.

Two companies of 27 FF, one platoon ex 4 Commando Battalion of SSG and one company of Tochi Scouts were ear marked for the operations, 30 Khassadars and two lady searchers were also part of this force, assistant political agent and muharrar were also integrated. Two Cobra helicopters and two cargo helicopters were also available on call.

Operation was envisaged in three phases, in the first phase the move from MiranShah and debussing at Boya Bridge moving towards the Khatti Killi from west, in second phase establishment of cordon and blocking positions, this was to be performed by the 27 FF. In Phase Three the political process was to be initiated with the help of political administration. Search was part of Phase Four and disengagement and move back were the last part of the operation. It was perceived that by the end of the evening it will be over. Operation was envisaged at the first light; thus move started at the midnight.

Brigade commander Brigadier Ghayoor (lieutenant general retired) was on leave, the standard battle procedures were not strictly adhered. The very warning which was given by the

Tochi Scouts in the April briefing highlighting the lack of communication to be a catalyst was about to turn true.

Conduct of Operations.

27 FF was inducted at the last moment, the new commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Tahir Wafai had taken over the command hours before the operation and as such had no reconnaissance of the area, his second in command had gone on leave and the officer had never been in the area before. Tochi Scouts one company was led by the Commandant Colonel Bangash, they initially moved on transport from MiranShah and disembarked at Boya Bridge where the other company joined in on foot from Boya.

Troops debussed short of Boya. At 0350 hours on 29th September the Talibans opened fire on the troops who were marching towards the Khatti Killi.The main force on the other hand was moving forward with FF Company leading followed by Tochi Scouts with SSG in the rear. As they moved forward in hours of darkness they came under fire from adjoining hills on the right side of direction of move, they had few NVGs' also and fire was exchange; three soldiers of FF and one Tochi Scout were injured and when they were being evacuated in the vehicle of SSG the vehicle itself was ambushed injuring two SSG soldiers. On this the medical officer of Tochi Scouts Captain Saeed moved forward and evacuated al the casualties, eye witness accounts highlight the devotion and courage of Captain Saeed who was challenged in the dark by the miscreants but he replied that I would have treated you equally with same care had you been also injured, so let me go. FF now started returning the fire and under this fire the Tochi and SSG moved forward and started occupying the positions but surprise on which this operation hinged was now lost. Artillery fire was called in depth, but the whole night was spent on ground without any clear identification of enemy who was also wearing the regular army uniform. Furthermore the announcements were being made in the village mosques urging people to take up arms and tribesmen started pouring in from the adjoining villages taking up positions on the dominating heights south of target area.

117 Brigade

By morning it became obvious that the troops have been encircled and outnumbered at Khatti Killi, thus 117 Brigade was inducted in the operation, its one unit 19 FF was at Datta Khel and other 23 AK was located at MiranShah along with remaining 4 Commando Battalion.

At 1040 hours the very first sortie of Cobras came in and attacked the miscreants, Major General Nadeem Yousaf then a major was part of the first formation, 'our first concern was regarding identification of friend and foe. Own troops (not all) were wearing militia dress (kameez shalwar) and miliatnts were wearing army uniform' Cobras engaged the militant suspected hideouts by flying higher and then taking a turn over the Boya bridge and attacking the militants from the rear. It was quite difficult mainly due to the fact that pilots were extremely cautious regarding hitting any woman or children

By 1350 hours the brigade tactical headquarters and 23 AK were heli-lifted to Boya from where they marched eastwards, brigade establishing the tactical headquarters at Pawani(3988 feet) and 23 AK attempting to establish a link up with the company of 27 FF. 4 Commando Battalion's company was also heli-dropped at a height of 3644 feet , it was accomplished by 1420 hours, however due to the miscreants accurate fire the intended drop zone was compromised, another company of 33 FF was dropped on the east of the village Khatti Killi, helicopters flying through Berai Sar and Panekzai, this company was in position from 1500 hours onwards, four helicopters flying in two sorties accomplished the drop. Two companies of 19 FF also reached the area by 1600 hours. Thus an outer cordon was established. These heliborne operations were not planned in advance rather these were impromptu. infantry batatlions were not very proficient in drills regarding embossing and debussing from helicopters; loose kit items close to helicopter can cost dearly in term of damage to helicopter engine etc.

33 FF Company Commander Major Muhammad Khan assessed the situation and decided to occupy the ridge lines where miscreants were already in position, he advanced along with his group and then communication was lost till 1845 hours[1]. On resumption of communication it was learnt that he is encircled and as such artillery fire was called in. Meanwhile another company of Tochi Scouts was moved from MiranShah towards the Khatti Killi adopting the southern route for link up with the 33 FF. Tochi Company arrived in the area in hours of darkness and tried to establish the contact, but to no avail. On the western side of the target 23 AK was able to secure the Pawani Ridge before the arrival of two companies of 19 FF that were heli-lifted from Datta Khel to Boya. The helipad inside the Boya Fort has limited space and approach is uni directional.

By the end of first day 29th September there were ten soldiers missing and there was no contact with them, it was only in the morning at 0900 hours that three dead bodies including that of company commander was found in a nullah, all in all three died, three were wounded and four other went missing in this link up east of target area.

30th September

The main effort and aim was to secure the heights around the target area where miscreants were hiding and carrying out fire on the troops below, another aim was to link with the company of 33 FF and Tochi Scouts on the east of target. Early in the morning three PAF's A-5 aircraft flew over the target area for fifteen minutes (0745-0800 hours) along with the Cobra Helicopters. Use of PAF was more psychological than having any effect on the operation in terms of physical damage. Cobras thus became the lifeline of own troops, they would encircle the area, fire cannons and rockets on the suspected and indicated positions. The mere sound of it raised the morale of own troops.

23 AK and 4 Commando started moving eastward from the night positions amidst fire from the miscreants, they were able to clear the first ridge known as Wat Khawara (2666

1 117 Brigade Headquarters Post Operation Report, 12 October 2005.

feet) and later Ware Pal , both actually formed ravines and nullahs, it was done by noon, simultaneously the two spurs between Spelmazai Algad and Prambagal Algad were also secured, Sepoy Hassan Jan of 4 Commando was shot first in the leg by the miscreants and as he bent down he received another fatal shot. Two Companies of 19 FF which were at Boya started moving forward and rest of the battalion was heli lifted from Datta Khel to MiranShah. Brigade tactical headquarters also moved forward eastward thus having a better observation of the events taking place below. Meanwhile at 1600 hours the company of 19 FF which had earlier been heli-lifted to MiranShah was now dropped near the company of 33 FF which had lost its company commander. Tochi Scouts suffered three casualties, Tochi was trying to link up with the western force and simultaneously they were trying to locate the Talibans on the ridges. Sarkho Ridge (2967 feet) was important in the context of the operation and as such it was secured by 1600 hours by 19 FF (less two companies) along with SSG.

1st October 2005

The area around the target was not utterly secured, there was sporadic fire coming down from the ridges and link up between the western and eastern forces was not completed yet, and with this aim the day started. PAF was called in for show of force and their A-5 aircraft flew low over the target area for 55 minutes (0735 – 0830). When the actual movement of troops started taking place the Cobra helicopters were in direct support along with artillery fire. 27 FF & 19 FF Regiments (each less two companies) and Company Tochi Scouts manoeuvred and secured the Sarkho Top and Spurs south of Dipuri Village; objectives were attained by 1225 hours.

On the other side at eastern end a search of the area was conducted by the company of 19 FF along with 33 FF & Tochi Scouts , later Berai Sar was secured at 1500 hours and link up with the 27 FF was achieved. The circle around the target was completed and now the actual task of searching the madrassa and the compound had to be undertaken. On the third day the locals came out and pleaded for a cease fire which was agreed and search of Maulvi Sadiq Noor's house was carried out and operation culminated successfully. The search started at 1525 hours and within an hour it was completed 'few items including a small quantity of rounds of different calibres were recovered'./

Brigadier Sardar Sajjad was a lieutenant colonel during the operation and in command of the 9 Army Aviation Squadron, he narrates that 'on 1st October 2005, I had brought the Corps Commander Lieutenant General Safdar to the MiranShah, we had landed at the brigade tactical headquarters at around 0830 hours, from where we flew to the MiranShah , corps commander attended a meeting, while I was at the helipad I received a message regarding the evacuation of a casualty from the Khatti Killi, as I was warming up the Lama, the corps commander also arrived, I explained to him the situation and thus he waited at the helipad and I flew to the Khatti Killi, after landing there I saw a body of troops who had plastered dry lips and wrinkled faces, they were waving their empty water bottles. I gave them all the water I had, placed the injured soldier in the helicopter and promised them that I am coming back with water. I gave

call to Air Traffic Controller at MiranShah to get hold of all the water bottles and water coolers, hats off to the Tochi Scouts that as I landed they were ready with water which I immediately took back to the Khatti Killi, I made another trip before I ran out of fuel and Tochi out of water bottles'.

2nd October 2005

At 1100 hours the Engineers demolition squad was heli lifted from the MiranShah and they carried out the demolition of the Sadiq Noor's house at 1540 hours. The force after the demolition of the house started extricating and reached back to MiranShah at 1915 hours under the cover of Cobra Helicopters.

Artillery fired 185 rounds of medium calibre in this operation against nine targets employing six observers. Fire support was provided by the batteries of 65 Medium, 86 Field, Tochi Field and Thall Scouts. Reportedly over 50 Talibans were killed in this operation and scores were injured including Sadiq Noor who unfortunately was able to escape through. The own casualties were four shaheeds (two from 33 FF, one from 44 Signals, One from 4 Commando) thirteen were injured (three each from 27 FF, Tochi Scouts & SSG, two each from 33 FF & 86 Field) there were three missing in action two from 33 FF and one from 86 Field.

Operation was a success as almost all the aims were achieved; only missing link was the capture of the Sadiq Noor. Casualties were also less only three fatal out of an infantry brigade plus (thirteen infantry companies) and three artillery units. However there were seventeen persons from army and scouts who were abducted and they were later released in pockets. In the end this operation highlighted the power of commander's personality in the outcome of the engagement. Commander 117 Brigade Brigadier Ghayoor was able to infuse it among the troops; the presence of commander on ground raised the morale and changed the course of conflict.

Operation at Khatti Killi had a chain reaction across the NWA; the most affected areas' were the Datta Khel and MiranShah. On the night of the operation 29th September no less than nine rockets were fired at the MiranShah Fort, two at Jallar Post at MirAli and on 30th September the road blocks were established by the miscreants at in MirAli, Degan, Qutab Khel and Khar Kamar (all Daur territories). MiranShah again came under attack on the next night and so were Idak and MirAli where eight rockets were fired upon which later resulted in the shahadat of two NCO's and other five were injured.

A simultaneous operation was envisaged at Datta Khel where Ajab Khan, Pashakai and Mushtaq Khan's houses were to be searched and they all were to be apprehended; preferably alive. They were all notorious arms smugglers although they were not rated in the same breath as Sadiq Noor was in terms of giving safe heavens to the miscreants but they were suspected of having soft corner for them. One company of Tochi Scouts, two companies of 5 AK Regiment and available artillery were the force available and task to carry out this operation. There had

been rows of incident in Datta Khel where on regular basis army and locals had narrow and minor clashes, for instance in one incident on 13th September 2005 a vehicle of 5 NLI was stopped at Dwa Toi resultantly firing was exchanged in Maizer Village. On 17th in another incident No.3 Wing and 5 NLI troops signalled a car to stop but it did not complied with instructions and fire was open on it. On 21st September 2005 a Jirga was held at MiranShah in which malaks of Madda Khel and political agent attended, the end result was a deadlock. On the next day another search operation was conducted by the army in Datta Khel. The elders and malaks pointed out that where as they are ready to cooperate but lady searchers must be there for search of the houses. The problem was that no lady searchers were available at the tehsil or village level and had to be transported from MiranShah. On 28th Another Jirga was held at Datta Khel Bazar in which Commanding officers of 19 FF, 5 NLI and Wing Commander Tochi Scouts participated, later searches of the 16 shops was carried out, it lasted for an hour without finding anything objectionable.

Compounds of all three were situated on the southern bank of the track leading from Datta Khel Post towards Idar Khel, almost a mile to the south of Chashmai, on the numerous fringes of Wucha Shaga Algad. Ajab Khan's compound comes first, then a kilometre on the west comes Pashakai's compound and finally the Mushtaq Khan's compound is the last one a further mile away, but it is almost inside the Dande Killi and north of the track, east of Idar Khel. The first compound was to be searched on 1st October and other two were on 2nd October 2005. In the initial planning all three were to be done simultaneously but later realising the gravity of situation and with the moving of force towards the Khatti Killi the plan was made flexible.

The best part of the operation was that it did not had to meet the same resistance as experienced at Khatti Killi, but nothing significance was gained from the searches. It was the diplomatic power of Tochi Scouts which paved the way for the searches. It must be remembered that only few years ago Tochi Scouts were able to gain foothold in the area. Tochi Scouts had to establish the inner cordons and army was given the responsibility of putting the outer cordons.

Army Aviation

In both operations (Khatti Killi & Datta Khel) the lack of coordination with Army Aviation was highlighted. Both should have been Army Aviation operations; ideally suited for a heliborne insertion. Comments of Tochi Scouts, 117 Brigade and 7 Infantry Division all highlights the lack of communication among the ground and helicopters. The division highlighted that the SSG Company was dropped before the drop zone and 33 FF Company ahead of the drop zone. This was the first major operation of Army Aviation in NWA involving ground troops[2] and it played a decisive part in both the attack and logistics part of it. There were and still are certain fundamental misconceptions about Army Aviation employment in the operations. Army Aviation from 2001 onwards underwent drastic changes in which new helicopters were inducted as part of efforts against the terror, special operation task force (SOTF) was raised in which aviators and SSG operated together; yet aviation did not had integral fighting troops.

2 History of Pakistan Army Aviation, p - 369

All the troops in aviation are on extra regimental employment from artillery and as such are not employed in operations. The need was and still is to have integral fighting troops as part of aviation squadron, which can be inserted into the battlefield as in Khatti Killi , who are capable of holding, advancing and fighting at their own. The insertion of troops from infantry, FC or from SSG who have very little experience of the helicopters is not a good omen. This was the primary cause of the delayed response from heli- inserted troops and in case of 33 FF it proved fatal. Cobra pilots at no stage were inducted in the planning phase and neither any of the cargo or utility pilot was taken into confidence. 33 FF Company had never been inside any of the helicopters lest to talk about the practice of jumping or orientation of ground. In case of Datta Khel Operation had the troops been part of aviation squadron then the issue of landing sites would have never aroused and moreover all three compounds would have been searched in a single day rather simultaneously.

Aviation squadrons are of multiple kinds, attack squadrons which are equipped only with Cobras, utility or cargo have Mi-17, Puma or Bell 412 Helicopters. These squadrons are part of aviation bases. Within a corps an aviation squadron has one odd Lama Helicopter and dozen fixed wing single engine MFI-17 aircraft. These pilots less the corps squadron never directly came under the command channel of field formation and as such the issue of communication remained a sore point.

Hassu Khel, North Waziristan . 2006

Most delicate part in Frontier Warfare is the issue of face saving & ego, whenever these two abstract values over rides historical evidence then disaster is almost knocking on door. It was decided to have the post in the same area but instead of having it on southern end as part of khassadar post, a new post was established on 25th December 2005 on the northern bank of Tochi River to be known as Hassu Khel Check Post. Tochi Scouts rightly demanded defence stores from the division but it was left to the political administration to do so; which they did but it was forcibly taken away by the locals on 29th December 2005.

The post was established under canvas on 31st December 2005 with 35 scouts. One officer (Captain Yahya Jan ex 58 Air Defence was the attached officer), two JCOs and 32 scouts. This post had the first warning of impending attack when on 3rd January 2006 at 2330 hours miscreants fired two rockets coupled with small arms fire, the scouts on duty responded back and attack was repulsed.

Post had established a barrier on the main road just adjacent to the bridge, it had four main machine gun mud bunkers. Two bunkers were at a distance of 500 meters away from the bridge on the northern direction (towards MirAli) two were on the bridge itself (one was on the road and other at the base of bridge), mortars were placed in the centre. The bias of post was towards the south east, all living and ammunition tents were pitched on the eastern side adjacent to the bridge relatively. It had six machine guns with 18500 rounds, one RPG-7 with 17 rockets, two mortars with 48 bombs and 36 hand grenades apart from APC as major weapons. Post

had the built up area on its west (Hassu Khel Village) on the east village of Mullagon with Tochi River flowing on the south, the road MirAli-Jallar bisects it in centre. There were open patches of field between the post and built up areas. On the night of 6/7 January 2006 , post was attacked by the miscreants and by morning it was totally overwhelmed. resultantly over ten scouts including Captain Yahya Jan were martyred and there was chaos and uncertainty about the full impact of the night attack on the post.

Miscreants who reportedly numbered over 300 were able to take away three sub machine guns,15 Rifles G-3, five MG1A3, one RPG-7,two 60mm Mortars and 48 grenades apart from sizeable quantity of ammunition which included 6000 rounds of G-3, 1450 rounds of SMG,1200 rounds of LMG,17 rockets of RPG-7 and 54 bombs of 60mm Mortar. Not only this they also made good of the ration at the post taking away 84 kilograms of dry milk, two kilogram of tea, 70 Kilograms of sugar and four tins of ghee. The sole armoured personnel carrier was also burnt.

After the incident the strength at the post was increased to 140, out of which 82 were from army and 58 from Tochi Scouts(No.2 Wing) commanded by a captain. It had six LMG's, one 14.5 mm gun, two RPG-7 and two 60mm Mortars apart from night vision devices.

Army Aviation was inducted on the morning after.Cobras were called from Wanna, who directly came overhead the Hassu Khel ; there was nothing to salvage. Maenwhile the infantry division had launched a rescue operation and the entire convoy was ambushed thus now the mission for Cobras was to provide cover for extrication of the troops. Few vehicles of the miscreants were hit, cannon fire provided the much needed relief to own ambushed troops. Cobras flew entire day in pair, getting refuellued and rearmed from the Miranshah. Lack of communication between pilots and the formation being supported was rather shaky.

Thus January 2006 became a turning point in the ongoing efforts by the state to curb the militancy in the agency. Hardly a day passed by when one of the posts was not subject to the fire attack, sometime it would last for minutes at other for hours. None of the army or scout could move freely. The Road Operating Days were in force from October 2005, now everyone had to travel in the military convoys. Extra man power was employed for this purpose; almost 4000 soldiers were employed on a single day.

Operation Hassu Khel. 7-9 January 2006. It was launched in support of 7 Infantry Division, eight pilots took part and four Cobras were employed. Five TOWs, 55 rockets and 2950 rounds of cannon were fired.

Noor Payo Khan – 1st March 2006

The main aim of Operation Al Mizan was the capture of Osama Bin Laden and his close associates. Raising of SOTF, induction of new Cobra and Bell helicopters were all part of this mission. It was very rightly perceived that if the command structure of Al Qaeda is captured than the wave of militancy will die its natural death. North Waziristan have historical links with

Arabs, and Osama Bin Laden during his stay in Pakistan to support the Mujahedeen fighting against the Russians had a base in the vicinity of Miranshah. Moreover Jalal ud Din Haqqani another fighter who was well respected in the agency due to his valour against the Russians was based on the outskirts of Miranshah Fort, rather for a long time he was residing in the Tochi Scouts quarters and left after 9/11. His madrassah was twice raided and searched in 2005 by ground troops but failed to apprehend him. Operation Saidgi also known as Noor Payo or Dande Killi was truly the first SOTF direct snap action operation. Noor Payo Khan was the code name of a high value target apparently residing in the locality.

Ides of March 2006

MiranShah remained the key to the success of military operation in North Waziristan Agency; Fort was and is a symbol of the state's authority. Any intrusion into it would have caused an irreparable damage to the dignity and morale of the Tochi Scouts and army.

On 9th February 2006 a single rocket attacked was launched in which the rocket landed at the northern edge of the runway at 2220 hours without causing any damage, in retaliation six rounds of artillery were fired. On next night another rocket was launched against the fort, this time eight rounds of artillery were fired back. On 13th February Cobra attack helicopters were employed, they fired four rockets on the suspected place from where the rockets were being launched on to the fort and garrison.

The month of March started with an operation by the SSG (Operation Noor Payo) at Saidgai on 1st March, it resulted in one fatal casualty and seventeen other soldiers wounded (army). Noor Payo himself was not captured but his two daughters along with 25 foreigners were reportedly killed, his two sons (Marjan & Syed Ali were wounded, captured and later treated at Tochi Scouts hospital). This resulted in all-out attack on the MiranShah Garrison. Maulvi Abdul Khaliq was the main instigator. Within an hour (1215–1320 hours) 17 rockets were fired on the Garrison another five were fired at 2140 hours.

Cobra Flight at Wana was ordered to fly to Miranshah in February 2006, it was realised that combat support loose its effectiveness while providing support to troops in Miranshah; due to flying time and weather restrictions while stationed at Wana. Major Mujtaba narrates 'we took off in the formation, it a mixed feeling in leaving the South Waziristan Scouts(SWS), there was one MI-17 with us which ferried our ground crew. We opted to fly direct, overhead Razmak at 7500 feet whereas MI-17 flew via Jandola because it had to drop few items there. We had three hundred rounds of cannon in each Cobra during this sortie. I had never been to Miranshah and only Major Nadeem Yousaf (presently brigadier) had landed once. It was an uneventful flight but after landing while conversing with pilots, I remarked that this is a historic landing. Cobras were parked in open, there was a sand bag wall for protection against the ground fire. We were accommodated in the Tochi Scouts Mess, ground was adjusted in the lines and our ammunition which was ferried by the MI-17 was dumped in an old underground bunker. Major General Akram Sahi was the General Officer Commanding of 7 Infantry Division'. After three

days, another flight of Cobras arrived at Miranshah and lieutenant Colonel Tehseen was made the commander of Cobras, a flight of MI-17 and a flight of Bell 412 also arrived, overall the entire aviation assets were placed under command Brigadier Nadeem who at that time was commanding the 21 Army Aviation Squadron. For next fifteen days, this flight carried out routine flights in and around Miranshah, Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid also joined in and conducted NVG training flights on 13th and 26th February 2006.

On 27th February, more helicopters started coming in, in order to maintain secrecy, only Cobra flight remained as permanent and other helicopters kept rotating. On the last light , 28th February , flight commanders were also called in for a final briefing. Brigadier Nadeem, Lieutenant Colonels Irfan Hasan and Abdul Hamid were already in picture about the operation.

Op "Nur Payo Khan" (NPK) was first DSA op ever conducted in Waziristan on 1 Mar 06. It was conducted during broad day lt against hy resistance. NPK compound was loc in Dande Killi. The compound had large dump of IEDs, expls, SA, comm eqpt, which was being used to impart trg to mscts. NPK was the call sign of Aka Mansur, who was reportedly an associate of Sheikh Ebrahim (Al-Muhajir). NPK was a facilitator of Ts, expert in comm and prep of IEDs. As per info 10-20 Ts were residing in the compound with 3 x OPs for EW. They were armed with AKs, RPKs and RPGs. Presence of Haqqani, Comd Ayub (call sign Aka Azad) was also expected. Anticipation was that local will not provide any sp to mscts, in case of any op.

Target identified as Noor Payo Khan is located in Dande Killi, almost ten miles north west of the airfield, SOTF had two companies of 1 Commando Battalion alongwith Ebrahem and Karrar companies which were organised into six combat teams each. Six MI-17, four Bell 412 and six Cobras of Army Aviation were employed in this operation. Special Operation Task Force (SOTF) was a newly raised outfit being commanded by Brigadier Muhammad Tallal of Special Service Group (SSG). Planning was carried out and briefing was given by the divisional staff and later SOTF and aviation commanders also put forward their respective plans. SOTF stressed that they should be dropped by the aviation within 300 meters of the target area and also picked up within same distance, this was debated by Brigadier Ghayoor (lieutenant general) who was commanding an infantry brigade then.

The plan adopted was simple, the Cobras would strafe the target area which was a cluster of mud houses, with TOWs and rockets, for three-five minutes, there by allowing the air assault helicopters to land. In the first wave Ebrahem and Karrar to land on the north-east and south of the compound, followed by companies of 1 Commando. Karar and Ebrahem to make an entry into the compound whereas commandos to cordon the area and after half an hour, the force would be extricated from the same landing zones. Overall it was decided that Cobras will engage the target area, followed by MI-17 dropping the SOTF and later they will be picked again, the planning envisaged half an hour of operation with another quarter of an hour being kept as unforeseen.

NPK compound is located Dande Killi, couple of miles north east of Miranshah. It was stressed by the intelligence agencies as the main hub of Taliban training and a centre of insurgency, presence of miscreants was definitely expected and it proved true.

The operation at NPK, is considered to the first Direct Snap Action {DSA} conducted by SSG, although minor operation was carried out on similar pattern at Dera Ismail Khan a year earlier. For NPK , six Mi-17 helicopters, five Cobra attack gunships and two Bell 412 helicopters were employed. SOTF was divided into two groups, Karrar and Ebrahim Companies each had six combat teams , whereas two companies of 1 Commando battalion were incorporated. Cobras softened up the target with missiles and heavy cannons, starting at 0730 and lifting the fire after ten minutes. In the first wave Karrar and Ebrahim company landed on the north east and south of the target compounds. Operation lasted for two hours.

Major Najeeb (major general, GOC Army Aviation) was serving in Gallants at Quetta and he joined the battlefield a week before the actual operation. He narrated in 2025 , ‘ we were two Bell 412 and there was one UH-1H of 50 Squadron as well. We had no detailed briefing rather the entire operation was being taken rather lightly, no major opposition from locals was expected’. He further highlighted the major difference in the approach towards the operation between Balochistan and Miranshah. ‘ Brigadier Tariq Hussain the group commander at Quetta was very particular regarding the briefing and debriefing even for a minor operation. He would go into very minutest detail of the operation, would make the sand model and spent hours on every aspect, at time it was bit irritating but in long run it engraved these aspects into the pilots and ground crew mind and it paid off very well’, For this particular mission at Noor Payo, my main task was rather ambigious as initially it was felt that there is no need to secure the landing zone and Bell 412 would be employed as and when the situation arises

On the given day ,The initial strafing by attack helicopters took the Taliban by surprise and quite a number were killed inside the compound. The miscreants who were outside the compound offered stiff resistance to the landing troops, two soldiers of Karrar Company suffered bullet injuries seconds after landing. Karrar true to its name fought through the fire, reached the compound, breached its gate and entered the compound. They searched the half a dosen rooms but found nothing extraordinary other than usual cache of arms and ammunitionEbrahim company also landed simultaneously , but on the southern edge, they were also under heavy miscreants fire, regardless of the fire, they provided fire support and cover to the assaulting Karrar teams .it was a daylight operation, thus by 0945 hours the companies wee helilifted from pick up zone. The major catastrophe was avoided at the pick up zone,

MI-17, after dropping commandos at target area would land at Miranshah for refuelling. Cobras to fly in pair, thus providing around the clock support to the assaulting troops and ensuring safety in landing and extrication. The secrecy was almost leaked as tickers on media were hinting about an operation in coming days. Initially the operation was planned at night thus NVG crew was mustered from all squadrons this was the reason that all helicopters had arrived at Miranshah, an hour before the commencement of operation it was delayed for

another twenty four hours and thus the crew and helicopters stayed at Miranshah. However this extraordinary assembly of helicopters and commandos blew off the secrecy; natives could sense that something is bound to happen but when and where , this they could only speculate.

Major Nasheed Iqbal was the Cobra flight commander. ' We reached the airfield at 0530 hours on the double cabins, crew chiefs had already prepared the Cobras, myself and Captain Shahid Butt (lieutenant Colonel retired) were in other Cobra , we were told in the briefing that there is an ammunition dump in the mud houses, stored underground. In the first vick, three Cobras took off, I was No.2 in formation, target was five three minutes of flying time, we circled at two hundred feet. There were three compounds all mud constructed, there was no movement in the area. I told my gunner to fire a TOW at the target area from a distance of 1700 meters, which he did but there was little impact on the mud structure. We made another pass and fired another TOW and by this time other two Cobras had also fired the TOWs thus there was a explosion and mud cloud rose'. The MI-17 and Bell formation also arrived, everything went like a clock work precision. Commandos jumped from running rotors and as the charged they received the first volley of fire from the militants. Cobras remained in air and now used cannons to suppress the fire coming on the SOTF.

MI-17 and Bell landed at Miranshah for refuelling whereas first formation of Cobras landed back after two hours of flying; another pair of Cobras were already in air. Major Mujtabah and his gunner had fired two TOWs and 600 rounds of cannon in first engagement. They again took off alongwith MI-17 and Bell for the extrication phase. One Cobra had encountered a compressor stall , thus there were four Cobras in air to provide the fire cover.

Pick up zones were the same which were used as landing zones; in order to keep operation simple. However by this time, much time has been spent in searching the compounds, tribesmen had now gathered on the surrounding high grounds and sniped the extricating force. As the first formation of cargo helicopters hover to pick up the commandos, the intensity of fire increase, jeopardising the safety of pilots and helicopters, amidst this barrage of small arms fire coming from behind the boulders the cargo helicopters were hit by rocket propelled grenade (RPG) which narrowly missed the fuel tank; five cargo helicopters were damaged but still managed to took off with commandos on board. All helicopters now headed back to Miranshah ' I saw MI-17 coming with smoke being emitting from its engine, it just made an approach and simply dropped down from few feet above ground level'.

Major Suhail Khan and Major Imran, both were later decorated with Tamgha –I-Jurat , so was Major Umar Rana. It is worth mentioning that Major Umar Rana served in 33 Squadron before he was posted back to the MI-17. Major Nadeem Raza later converted onto the Cobra and served in 31 Squadron (2009 -2012). Major Suhail was serving in 21 Squadron, ' I was already doing training flights on NVG at Kohat when I got the orders to fly to Miranshah, Captain Nadeem Raza was my student at Kohat, thus I took him along in order to give him more experience on NVG under operational environments, I am proud of him , he remained calm during this almost suicidal flight from target area to Miranshah'. Major Irfan (now lieutenant colonel) was the co-pilot with Major Umar Rana (now colonel).

Lt Col Imran presently GSO-1 Operations at HQ Army Aviation Command recalls in August 2025. I was the co-pilot with Major Suhail, we had dropped the commandoes as per plan, and then landed back at Miranshah, we were supposed to pick them up after twenty odd minutes thus our rotors were running and we remained within cockpits. Then came the news through wireless of pitch battle , similarly the rockets started falling on the air field. Through this chaos and fire we took off and headed towards the Noor Payo at low level, there was firing going on and we hovered, few soldiers managed to get onboard yet few were struggling , they were providing the covering fire for others. The time seems to get stopped; everything was rather in slow motion, we had to pick all the commandoes, all of a sudden I felt an excruciating pain in my right shoulder and simultaneously a loud thud was heard, we have been hit with a RPG missile and there was smoke within the cockpit. Major Suhail still managed to pick the last commando and landed safely at Miranshah with Mi-17 wrapped in flames and smoke. Major Jahangir and Major Abdul Aziz Niazi's Mi-17 alongwith Major Malik Mumtaz and his co-pilot Major Arsalan Shaheen, major Alta fur rehman and his co-pilot Major Chanzeb Jadoon also received multiple bullets on their MI-17 during picking up of the commandoes .

Time at Miranshah was half past twelve, as the crew just switched off their helicopters, the tribesmen attacked the Miranshah airfield with unguided rockets, which almost half a kilometres away from parked helicopters, but the threat was real and one cannot predict about the next fall of such improvised rockets. Thus Brigadier Nadeem simply ordered all helicopters to flyout. The damaged helicopters remained at Miranshah , so was one Cobra which had suffered from compressor stall, rest all aircraft including Cobra took off. The cargo helicopters set course for Bannu; it was during this phase that Bell 412 piloted by Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Latif with Major Farooq Zahoor as his co-pilot, received multiple bullets on their helicopter. whereas Cobras got busy in engaging the militants. Overall Cobras fired fifteen TOWs, six rockets and 2300 rounds of cannon in this operation.

Miranshah fort and airfield remained under intense attack from miscraents even after the flyout of the army aviation helicopters. The NVG crew of Cobras at Kohat were now asked to hit the militants. Major Nadeem Yousaf (major general) alongwith other pilots were having food in Kohat bazar when they received the message and they rushed to the air field. Policy at that time was that NVG crew used to be based at Kohat and would fly to Miranshah in the evening, spent the night there for any mission during hours of darkness and after first light would fly back to Kohat for a day rest whereas the day crew would fly to Miranshah and spent the day and fly back at evening.

On this particular evening, the weather started getting bit rough, however NVG formation of Cobras were put on hold at Bannu due to unceratinity at Miranshah. 'When we reported overhead Miranshah in hours of darkness, the entire area and town was giving the green look as is the view when you are under NVG. There were constant flashes of fire coming from almost every surrounding building on the fort. We engaged them with TOWs and cannon, we made three or four engagements. We were in communication with ground formation and own artillery had stopped firing because of our safety; yet we saw flashes of artillery being fired

, those were very dreadful moments for the Cobra formation, we yelled on the ATC for this dangerous act, later it aws revealed that Divisional Artillery had stopped shelling but the two guns of Tochi Scouts were not informed about the stoppage of barrage thus this precarious and perilious situation for the Cobras.' Further more during the same engagement one of the TOW missile bursted in the air prematurely. Cobras at night have advantage over the miscraents in term of fire, however the main and most important aspect from pilots and from army aviation commanders were the safety of innocent population and this one afctor alone has been the over riding factor in every engagement of Cobras over the years and decades.

Later during the debriefing of the operation it was admitted that last minute changes in the operation took the secrecy shroud off the mission . On 4/5th March 2006, tribesmen again attacked the airfield ' miscreants attacked airfield with rockets and small arms fire, four Cobras located inside the strip restored the situation by engaging the miscreants precisely, fourteen TOWs were fired alongwith 5000 rounds of cannon'. During this engagement, Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen fired the first TOW at night, it was aimed at the Khushboo hotel and it pierced through the room.

'Operation Noor Payo Khan (NPK) was conducted few miles north of Miranshah, eight pilot of 21 Army Aviation Air Assault Squadron and two pilots of 25 Army Aviation Air Assault Squadron participated in the operation. A total of 7.7 hours were flown by Bell-412 helicopter

Operation Said Gai also known as Operation Noor Payo, 4 March 2006. It was launched at 1300 hours, six cobras took part in it and they fired eight TOWs, six rockets and 4950 rounds of cannon. Very next day an operation was carried out in Miranshah city, to hit the hideouts of miscreants, in the operation no less than 14 TOWs and 3000 rounds of cannon were fired by four Cobras.

As a punitive measure and to curb any further attacks on the fort the dominating points and buildings in the city which included the adjoining hotels namelyHotel Khushboo and Hotel 7 UP were hit. Water reservoir a 150 feet high tower was spared, Major General Nadeem Yousaf was in the attack formation and his judgement was , if I hit the water tower than the water supply to the city and hospital would be cut off and that made me spared the water tower.Artillery shells also targeted another high rise building where as the Cobra strafed the water reservoirs on different houses which were acting as sniper and observation posts for the miscreants. Above all Madrasah Gulshan Ul Uloom was demolished, Fazal-e-Ghani Hospital Complex also met the same fate, a number of houses facing the eastern wall of the fort were all demolished.

On 17th March 2006, another operation was carried out in the near vicinity of Spinwam in which a pair of Cobras took part, however only two rockets and 100 rounds of cannon were fire. Operation Manna was conducted on 4th April 2006, during this operation no less than five Cobras took part, they fired eight TOWs, 13 rockets and 650 rounds of cannon.

On 5th April 2006, combat aviation flight at Miran Shah was tasked to search and engage miscreant in the general area Shatghalai Narai post ex 5NLI, where three soldier were martyred after attack by the miscreant. Major Kashif as captain of Cobra helicopter took off at first light. They were later diverted towards Mana where an encounter between troops and the fleeing miscreant was in progress. Cobra helicopter spotted miscreant and attacked vigorously with cannon from the height of 10,500 feet. At said altitude, handling of Cobra helicopter with highly sluggish controls, minimal ground clearance and exceeding limits for TOW firing was a highly demanding task at risk of own life. The officer being captain of the Cobra helicopter in a critical operational and technical situation skillfully managed to harmonies his attacks with the ground troops. Assisted by effective engagement from cobra helicopter 40 x miscreants were killed 19 x apprehended and few trucks and mud houses were destroyed.

The successful operation proved to be a source of high morale and motivation for the troops since for the first time such a number of armed miscreants were apprehended in North Wiziristan during an encounter. In recognition of his outstanding display of valour, professionalism, skillful attacks on miscreants risking own life and dedication with the accomplishment of task beyond the call of duty . Similar operation was launched in Spalga between 22-24 April 2006, pair of Cobras took part in it; they fired three TOWs, four rockets and 327 rounds of cannon. Datta Khel also came under attack when operation was launched at 1100 hours on 13th June 2006, a pair of Cobra took part and fired three TOWs, and 120 rounds of cannon. Spinwam II was launched at 1530 hours on 15th June 2006, pair of Cobra fired five rockets and 300 rounds of cannon.

Tut Narai – April 2006

Tut Narai is a small but an important post on the track Datta Khel-Razmak, it is located approximately forty odd miles south west of Miranshah at an altitude of 3400 feet. The post itself is astride the track and is a complex of three posts, two on one side and one check posts on the other side. Its importance is in checking all vehicular movement towards the Razmak from Datta Khel. In 1940s the post was duped by the outlaws when they entered the post dressed as women under veil. However, in 2006, the militants attacked it in the hours of darkness and soon posts sent a SOS to the Miranshah, where Tochi Scouts passed the distress call to army.

The main position situated close to a dry nullah and main track which leads from Datta Khel to the Gardei and Razmak passes like a curving snake thus separating the North-western post from the other two posts. Main Post had three rooms two were occupied by the Khassadars and the Tochi Scouts and the third room by the 5th Northern Light Infantry (NLI); it also had a lawn and a mosque. Apart from this main position the post had two more protection posts, 500 yards away on the Northwest which is 250 meters higher than the main post and was manned by the Tochi Scouts, the other protection post located 150 yards towards the Southwest and 50 meters higher than the main post was manned by the 5 NLI. In terms of tribes Manzar Khel occupied the northern and southern edges of the post whereas Khaddar Khel inhabited the western edge. The post is covered by high ground all around; the lone heli pad is across the track from the post gate.

The Tochi Scouts protection post was located next to the track junction from where apart from the main track a branch track leads towards a civilian house across the nullah. The size of hillock on which the protection post was sited had length of 125 yards and with of 30 yards. This post had barbed wire all around; post itself is in elongated shape having two machine gun bunkers on each end with a living room in the mid, latrines on its east and kitchen on the south west. There were eight trenches which starting from Northwest were numbered as 1- 8. Trench No.2 and No.5 were the machine gun trenches and No.3 was a RPG- 7 trench. The housing (living, latrine, kitchen) in the middle thus divides the whole post into two parts, limiting observation and fire among the various trenches on both sides. Post had a wall about four feet high and thirty yards away from the protection post itself, it was in a depression, ahead of wall barbed wire was placed for protection. A black rock on the south-eastern edge restricted the observation and fire.

On the night of 23/24th all the three complexes were simultaneously put under fire initially and later physical assault was carried out on the Tochi Scouts post. Naib Subedar Shafi Ur Rehman Wazir was the post commander at the Tochi Post (Northern) with fourteen other scouts.

Captain Zubair narrates 'it was past midnight when I got the message, I informed Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid who was on a tenure at Miranshah, I also passed the order to the ground crew to arm the Cobra with rockets and one TOW, similarly the other Cobra was also armed. By the time we reached the airfield the ground crew were still busy in arming the Cobras. we took off at 0200 hours. We were on NVG, it was a moonless night and we flew westward. Flying time was not more than fifteen minutes. From a distant the flashes of fire were visible through NVG, contact was made with the post commander. The first issue was how to determine the extent of the post. Thus, post commander was told to fire two rockets from each edge of the post towards the militants, which they did and we could make out a rough extent of the post. we fired four rockets towards the attacking militants. It was still very difficult to make out between friend and foe but it did the job.' In one Cobra , Major Zubair Kaayni and Major Nadeem Yousaf were flying, in the other Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid was in command and Bell 412 was being flown by Major Khalid (lieutenant colonel retired).

First Cobra turned left and other Cobra also strafed at the outer edge. In the next approach Major Nadeem Yousaf saw one vehicle on the track, after confirming that it is not ours, one TOW was fired and it did hit the vehicle. Bell 412 was circling overhead Datta Khel. The two Cobras remained in air overhead the post, with one coming back to Miranshah for refueling and while it was in position the other did the same. Aim was to keep the morale of the posts high. In the morning at first light Bell 412 which had also refueled, landed amidst Cobra cover to pick up the casualties and landed safely back at Miranshah.

A series of operations then commenced in and around Miranshah to establish the writ of state. On 5th April 2006, combat aviation flight at Miran Shah was tasked to search and engage miscreant in the general area Shatghalai Narai post where three soldiers ex 5 NLI were martyred after attack by the miscreant. Major Kashif as captain of Cobra helicopter took off at

first light. They were later diverted towards Manna where an encounter between troops and the fleeing miscreant was in progress. Cobra helicopter spotted miscreant and attacked vigorously with cannon and rockets from the height of 10,500 feet. At this altitude, handling of Cobra helicopter with highly sluggish controls, minimal ground clearance and exceeding limits for TOW firing was a highly demanding task at risk of own life. Assisted by effective engagement from Cobra helicopter, 40 miscreants were killed and nineteen were apprehended and few trucks and mud houses were also destroyed..

Operation Manna April 2006

Operation Manna was conducted on 4 /5 April 2006, during this operation no less than five Cobras took part, they fired eight TOWs, 13 rockets and 650 rounds of cannon. Similar operation was launched in Spalga between 22-24 April 2006, pair of Cobras took part in it; they fired three TOWs, four rockets and 327 rounds of cannon.. Datta Khel also came under attack when operation was launched at 1100 hours on 13th June 2006, a pair of Cobra took part and fired three TOWs, and 120 rounds of cannon. Spinwam II was launched at 1530 hours on 15th June 2006, pair of Cobra fired five rockets and 300 rounds of cannon.

Between 2002-2006 almost three hundred hard core Al-Qaeeda operatives have been arrested in Pakistan and over 80% of all wanted persons have been arrested in Pakistan by USA but all this has come at a very high price. From 2002 the attacks on Christian community started increasing in which church and schools were targeted, all foreign national became a target of suicide or kidnap attempts. In June 2002 eleven French engineers were killed in suicide attack and later American journalist Daniel pearl was butchered, Pakistan army itself became target of suicide attacks and one three star general has been killed and other has been injured apart from over 200 other all ranks killed in various attacks. A series of bomb and suicide attacks virtually paralysed the country and brought it to close to anarchy. The public support especially in tribal areas started increasing for the Talibans, this was mainly due to the religious and tribal ties

On 5th September 2006 at 1130 hours a grand jirga was held at MiranShah in which peace pact was signed, GOC 7 Division Major General Akram Sahi, Acting Commandant Tochi Scouts Lieutenant Colonel Bilal, Political Agent North Waziristan Agency, Taliban commanders and over 350 local malaks and ulemas attended it, Political Agent signed it on behalf of the state and on behalf of Taliban it was signed by the seven Maulanas, Holy Koran was made as witness. On very next day as a sign of good will Taliban arrested one suspicious man and handed it over to the 7 Division. Tochi Scouts were once again allowed to visit the MiranShah Bazaar and travel in private transport; it seems as if the good old times are returning. As a sign of goodwill a friendly volleyball match was played between the Tochi Scouts and civilians on 20th September, few army players were also accommodated in the scouts' team. A free mobile medical camp was also established on 17th October 2006 by 117 Brigade, over 433 patients were treated including 206 females and 123 children.

In 2006, Swat area of Pakistan underwent a radical change when people started an armed campaign to have Islamic laws in their territory and called themselves as 'Taliban' soon it became a full fledged armed resistance and employed a corps of Pakistan Army

Night Vision Goggles (NVG). Capability to strike at night

From 2001 onwards the first and major thrust was to be able to fly and fight in darkness through use of NVGs. Collaboration with American resulted in joint training of NVGs with them. The first such training exercise was conducted at Pasni from 20th to 26th September 2002. The training was co-ordinated at Joint Services Headquarters level and the purpose at aviation level was to train nucleus of few officers who would subsequently be instrumental for training all Aviators. Pilots including Major Chanzeb and Major Shahzad went from Qasim Base.Own pilots stayed at Pasni and American crew along with a Black Hawk helicopter used to come from the Carrier for exercise purpose. Americans made our pilots familiar with the NVGs and scanning techniques. One day one American was asked why he is collecting sand before their daily departure back to carrier and he replied "One of our colleague is having her birthday today, she has been on the carrier for quite long and has requested mud as a birthday gift". Another similar training with Americans was conducted at Jacobabad Airfield between 20th October-20th November 2002. Ground Training followed by 20-25 hours of flying training comprised the syllabi. Six pilots (2xMI-17, 2x Puma and 4xY-12) were trained including Lieutenant Colonels Tariq Naseem, Muhammad Irfan, Haider Raza Bangash and Asif Jah, Majors included, Khalid Ahmed, Kashif, Adnan Warraich and Amanullah. Flight Engineers Subedar Shaukat,Havildars Saqlain,Ashraf,Inayat and Siddique., were amongst the pioneer trainees. Later on, the cadres were planned by Aviation Command to be held under Groups. Lieutenant Colonel Irfan narrates "Mr Tiernney was my American instructor on Puma, he was a Vietnam Veteran,and had over 3600 hours which included only 40 hours on Puma (Irfan himself an instructor, has over 4000 Flying hours which include hours in excess of 2000 on Puma). Initially I gave him currency and later we flew together with NVGs. We both would wear the goggles apart from two scanners, flight engineer would remain normal. NVG training was carried out relentlessly. Mr Tiernney would always fly with his regulation gear that included one rifle, one pistol and dagger apart from few pouches. When I inquired what all is in it, he replied 'all junk, mate, but regulations are regulations'. One exercise at night was conducted near Pano Aqil that involved realistic planning and conduct. This was a major achievement, fear of night had been conquered. Combat Squadrons later conducted night battle drills.

In 2007 NVG training of Cobra, Bell 412 and Mi-17 crew was undertaken at Multan under the US team and also the squadrons conducted similar training to gain proficiency on the NVG., In 2009 the very first batch of pilots and crew were trained at USA all in all a total of twelve pilots and equal number of scanners were trained in USA.

Army Aviation Operations in Baluchistan - 2006

Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province in terms of area and it is least populated mainly due to its geography. It is also largely based upon tribal society but this tribal culture is markedly different from Waziristan; within Baloch tribal culture the 'sardar' or the tribal chief is rather hereditary in nature. The tribes do have regular and long lasting feuds among themselves which quite often bursts into violence either against each other or against the state. To protect strategic installations in general area Sui, a dedicated combat and cargo aviation support was provided from 12 January to 24 August 2005. Extensive flying did not took place, as mere presence of aviation assets created the requisite deterrence for the miscreants and radiated strategic effects.

The Operations in Balochistan were different in nature from the other operations; the magnitude of firepower was less but the duration of flying and the administrative aspects were far graver than the tribal areas operations. Cobras were deployed at Jacobabad and Quetta for the operations. The fine dust took its toll on the sensitive parts of Cobra, for which there was no remedy other than to repeatedly carry out compressor wash.

Operation Hifazat

To protect strategic installations and established states writ in general area Sui, dedicated combat and cargo aviation support was provided from 12 January to 24 August 2005. Though extensive flying did not take place, however mere presence of aviation assets created the requisite deterrence for the miscreants and radiated strategic effects. On 17th March 2005 a flight of Air Wolves under Major Abdul Hamid was flown to Sukkur to carryout punitive action after an army convoy was ambushed near Sui. Cobras comprising of crew from both squadron was placed at Jacobabad. They were housed in a bachelor quarters inside the base, pilots include Major Rizwan Mahmud (commanded Combat Group), Captains Mubbashir, Bhatti and Arif Shafique. Bell was also placed at Jacobabad. Operation Destiny

The present trouble started in Balochistan in December 2004 when convoy of President General Pervaiz Musharraf came under rocket attack, while addressing a gathering at Kohlu on 14th December 2005 on the morning of 14th December 2005. 'Situation warranted immediate evacuation of President and neutralisation of miscreants. Four AH-1F and one Jet Ranger provided not only neutralisation of miscreants but also provided aerial cover to President for safe extrication from the area'. Thus started operations in the tribal areas of Balochistan, it includes areas of Kohlu, Kahan, Maiwand, Barkan and Sibi.

Quetta, Multan, Jacobabad, Sukkur and Rajanpur were earmarked as the base of operations. Sibi, Loralai, Dera Ghazi Khan, Kashmore, sui and Rajanpur were earmarked as the forward area arming and refuelling points (FAARPs) Aviation mission were categorised into two categories, Composite missions were this which involved employment of assault and attack helicopters and solo missions were those which involved only combat helicopters The general pattern of the missions involved high altitude reconnaissance by the Cessna (ex 50 Squadron),

Cessna would remain in air during the operation. Two UH-1H Helicopters armed with two machine guns would lead the Cobras into the target area, these UH-1hs had four troops from Frontier Corps Baluchistan on board alongwith one air traffic control set; these helicopters also act as quick reaction force. Cobras main task was to neutralise the target, cleared the target area for subsequent landing of air assault troops and during their landing, provide the covering fire. Ground troops in cases were to secure the landing zone; in other cases the troops aboard UH-1H secured the landing zone and then through smoke or by hoisting orange flag as an indicator of securing the landing zone. Cobras would initiate their approach only after getting the signals from ground troops. Meanwhile the UH-1Hs would position themselves on the flanks and provide observations to the Cobras.

Aviation assets were placed in support of 12 Corps and Frontier Constabulary Balochistan to carry out operation against Farraris camps since **14th December 2005.** 202 Aviation Group was assigned the overall responsibility. Due to the effective utilization of Aviation, over a dosen Farrari Camps were destroyed within a year. These farrari camps were nothing but a hideout of wanted hardened criminals by the provincial police departments. With the integration of 50 Aviation, Squadron (BSP), FLIR system installed in Cessna Caravan was effectively utilized for the first time.

Meanwhile, unfortunately Nawab Akbar Bugti former Governor of Balochistan had been challenging the writ of the state for sometime. His activities reached to a level where assassination attempts were made on the President of Pakistan during his visit to the area. State after failure of talks decided to impose its writ. It was code named as '**Operation Destiny'**. A series of operation starting from January 2006 till final apprehension of Akbar Bugti were conducted.

4 January 2006. 'Operation Siakoh Eight' Cobra helicopters participated. Five Tows and Seven Rockets were fired during this operation . **4-7 February 2006. '**Operation Al-Sart' and 'Operation Chashma Camp' (9 February 2006) were aimed at reduction of miscreants camps near Dera Bugti and clearance of route. Aviation assets for these operations were placed at Sukkar. Deputy Commander 202 Army Aviation Group, Colonel Raheel Hafeez Sehgal Sitara-I-Jurat, led the operation as ABC (Air Battle Capt). **12-13 February 2006. '**Operation East' and 'West Hill' was also planned to clear Dera Bughti – Sangsila axis. During a reconnaissance/ surveillance mission own helicopter had a near miss from a surface to air missile fired on their Bell-412 helicopter.

13 June 2006. 'Operation Al-Barq'. State tightened its grip on the miscreants around Dera Bugti and surrounding area. Finally an authenticated report about the presence of Baram Dagh, grand son of warlord Akbar Bugti was received. A massive operation consisting of six Cobras, four Bell-412 & eight MI-17 helicopter took part in it. Commander 202 Army Aviation Group, Brigadier Tariq Hussain Khan acted as ABC (Air Battle Captain). The location of Baram Dagh was named as BD Banglow. Pano Aqil was selected as Forward Area Base and Sui become Forward Operating Base. The operation was a partial success as the hide out was completely

destroyed and a number of miscreants were either killed or captured. During the operation one MI-17 piloted by Major Basharat Noor and Captain Bilal Hussain met an emergency just eight miles short of target, after a safe landing, quickest possible recovery was made and the helicopter flew back to Sui. The dismal part of the operation was that due to improper search done by the grand forces, Baram Dagh managed to slip away. However, the daring action of Cobra and ABC on Bell-412 helicopter (Major Khattak) six Miscreant were captured by SSG troops.

1st July 2006. 'Operation Al-Nasr'. Akbar Bugti's location was confirmed at the hills north of Sangsila near the Bugti Murre tribal boundry. One company of regular infantry and 4 Commando Battalion were picked up from Pano Aqil and after refueling at Sui were dropped in the target area. eight Cobras, six Bell-412, eight MI-17 and two Puma helicopters were used in this operation. Force was landed after PAF Fighters had softened up the target. Operation was delayed due to bad weather. The target area was full of resistance and many helicopters received bullets hit, out of which. Lieutenant Colonel Abid Ali, CO 4 Army Aviation Air Asault Squadron had a near miss when fifteen bullets hit his helicopter while he was landing two bullets hit his seat but due to armour protection he remained safe. Due to extreme bad weather on 4 July force could not be picked up and on 5th July the de-induction took place Akbar Bugti and Baram Dagh both managed to escape taking the cover of darkness.

8th July 2006. 'Operation Al Fateh'. Baram Dagh's location was once again confirmed in general area Lehri. 15 miles west of Sangsila. Tactical Head Quarter was established at Sangsila. There was no time for reconnaissance or detailed briefing. six Cobras, four Bell 412, six MI-17 and one Puma immediately took off for Sangsila. As there was no prior planning and the target was on the run. It was a near catch as the vehicle of BD was located but he managed to escape on foot. On 9th Jul 2006 the force was de-inducted and helicopters flew back to Pano Aqil.

22-27 July 2006. 'Operation Sun Rise'. The base of operation was Sibi, four AH-1F, four Bell-412 and five MI-17 helicopters participated in the operation. one company each of 40 Baloch and 28 Azad Kashmir Regiment was heli lifted from Sibi and dropped at target area.

23 August 2006. Successfully operations in Dera Bugti tribal areas compelled miscreants to move further towards north. Akbar Bugti. Baram Dagh and Balach Mari flee to Kohlu. After confirmation of their position, Law Enforcing Agencies planned to strike the final blow by the name of Operation Rahbar six Cobras five Bell - 412 and six MI – 17 helicopters were planned to undertake the mission. Lieutenant Colonel Abid Ali CO 4 Army Aviation Air Aslt Squadron conducted the operation as ABC. Akbar Bugti was expected to be in general area Kalgir-I-Daman near Karmo Wad While Cobras and Artillary provided fire support, MI-17 and Bell-412 helicopters dropped the task force in target area. Akbar Bugti's cave was surrounded and on 26 August he was killed when his cave collapsed after a blast, probably some timed explosive was planted by Akbar Bugti in the cave. Dead body of Akbar Bugti was recovered on 30 August and on 31 August he was buried in Dera Bugti, He was a brave rebel. Due to the collapsing of

caves four officers including Commanding Officer 2 Commando Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Aamir), embraced Shahdat and two officers and two other ranks were seriously injured All these casualties were carried out on helicopters

21-23 September 2006. 'Operation Nagau Ghar' was planned on to capture Baram Dagh. The operation was conducted form Sibi. The operation got delayed as the cobra's got some technical problems due to the height of the target. However, later that day the operation went as planned and the force was inducted.

Operation Destiny as compare to the operations in Waziristan and other tribal agencies was a relatively low intensity operation in terms of ammunition consumed. There were only two bullet hits on Cobra, that too on 8th July 2006 at Sangsil. The heat, logistics, fatigue and maintenance were the main issues in this campaign. Maintenance was a major issue while operating in Balochistan, it has extreme weathers, thus there were issues of Cobra starting up in cold weather and similarly the fine dust in summer was a constant challenge to the maintenance crew After the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti the miscreants were led by his grandson, thus the militancy started spreading which was sponsored by the enemies of the state. Operation Nuttal was launched on 7th January 2007 In March 2007, Cobras for the very first time operated at Gwador , an operation was conducted by the field formation on 14th March 2007, a pair of Cobras took part and fired 150 rounds of cannon. Last major operation of the decade was launched on 24th October at Noshki in which two Cobras took part , they fired only 100 rounds of cannon.

Operations against the militants in the **Bajaur** started in **October 2006**, when a formation of Cobras alongwith one Bell 412 took part in the destruction of militant hideout at Chenagai on 30th October 2006. Bajaur is the smallest political agency in terms of area and is the largest in terms of population. and also shares a 52 Kilometers borders with Afghanistan. Unlike other tribal agencies, Bajaur historically and culturally has been a confederation of khanates, ruled by khans thus Khanate of Khar, Nawagai, Pashat, Jandol. It covers an area of 1290 square Kilometers with a population of close to 600000. Khar is the agency headquarters and other major towns are Munda (22 kilometers away), Nawagai (28 kilometers away) and Pashat is 16 Kilometers away from Khar

North Waziristan - 2007

At the beginning of 2007, the focus of operations shifted from South Waziristan to North Waziristan Agency (NWA) it is worth recalling that from July 2005, army took over the operational control of the NWA. Direct Snap Action (DSA) tactics were adopted, which incorporates swift insertion of commandos through helicopters, close to the target from multiple directions and extrication of force again through helicopters; all within a time period of thirty odd minutes. Army Aviation was deployed at Miranshah in the form of Cobra flight supported by Mi-17 and Bell 412 flights. New operational base at Ghazi was under construction. There were many things already in pipeline like induction of new combat, cargo and utility aircraft, upgradition of existing fleet and above all the induction and training of new pilots and technicians.

Year started with Eid Ul Azha prayers at Tochi Stadium at 0835 hours and at 1000 hours Headquarters Logistics 7 Division arranged a tea break for all officers and JCO's of MiranShah Camp including the pilots and maintenance crew. The hopes of a lasting peace in the agency had their last breath in 2007 when a wave of IED's, suicidal attacks, ambush, raids, fire and physical attacks rocked the agency. Statistically only 67 such attacks had taken place till September 2006, out of which 24 such incidents occurred in July alone. Therefore in the two years period since army took control only 91 attacks occurred but then from here till February 2008 it touched an all-time high of 426 such incidents. Similarly the casualties which were only 86 shaheeds till September 2006, but in the next eleven months there were 215 shaheeds and 480 wounded. The peace pact which was signed on 6th September 2006 did not last long

In 2007 there were five suicide attacks, 22 IED attacks, three ambushes and 299 fire raids which were faced by the Tochi Scouts. Between July-2nd October 2007 alone there were 137 fire raids, two ambushes, two raids and 10 IED's attacks. Nine scouts embraced shahadat and 30 other were injured. The year 2007 had started with a suicide attack on a convoy carrying army on 22nd January near MirAli. Four soldiers lost their lives in this. In July 2007 alone there 26 fire raids and rocket attacks.

Thus the pattern of Army Aviation support was ased upon 'as and when required' basis from Miranshah. Invariably after every suicide or IED attack the Cobras were called upon to sanitize the affected area, Mi-17 or Bell 412 for evacuation of casulaties. It is difficult to engage the miscreants once they have escaped from the site and mixed up with local population. Cobras had the single most impact in terms of raising of morale of the troops on the posts.

On 30th July 2007, at 1630 hours the news was received that **Banda Post** has been ambushed, pilots other than those on duty were relaxing in the room .Captain Imaad Hussain Siddiqui was jogging and when he noticed unusual movement he ran for the airfield and join Major Jahantab as his gunner. They were the first one to take off and reached Banda within minutes. They dived and Imaad observed the militants climbing up and few vehicles parked in a scattered manner. They fired 300 rounds of cannon and a TOW in the first engagement which halted the militants advance. In the meantime they were joined by another Cobra which also took on the militants. meanwhile Jahantab –Imaad refuelled the Cobra and were back on site. The militants were now fleeing from the scene, but Imaad fired two more TOWs which destroyed the leading and centre vehicle thus compelling the miscreants to fled in all direction and were mowed down by the cannon fire. 'This was the only action in which security forces retrieved 15 bodies of miscreants and all five vehicles were destroyed. Next day post commander of Banda Post came to visit pilots specially Captain Imaad Hussain Saddiqui to thank him for saving their day'.

Pash Ziarat, 12-16th September 2007.

Pash Ziarat area, is north of Razmak, it is a ridge line which covered the track movement going from Razmak to Manna. During British era three posts were constructed on the ridge line known as Alexandria, Duncan and the Pash Ziarat Post. Unfortunately the post itself was lost to Taliban by the army and frontier corps. Now the mission assigned was the capture of the post itself and destruction of the training centres of Taliban .The main ridge known as Rocky ridge have a length of 800-900 meters running in west-east direction, it was heavily fortified by Taliban in anticipation of the intended attack; it was situated 400-500 meters north of lost post. The Pash Ziarat Post was located on the north of Razmak-Mana track where as the Khassadar Post was situated on the south of Pash Ziarat Post along the Razmak-Manan track. A compound of Taliban was reported to be in the base of Jamiat Ridge which was dominating both the Pash Ziarat and the Khassadar Posts. Own forces comprised of 122 soldiers, three junior commissioned officers, five officers, two artillery observers, one medical orderly and four sappers, all in all 138 all ranks.

On 10th September, 2007, the force was gathered at Miranshah and move to Razmak in convoy, protection to the convoy was provided by the Cobras, The initial plan was offset by the weather and as such delayed for a day. Twenty men each were dropped from three Bell 412 helicopters at the ridge three Kilometres short of the objective (Pash Ziarat) before the last light. ' We took off from Razmak airfield early in the morning, we had detailed planning on the map and also the intended area was reconnaissance earlier, yet the precise spots were not decided in totality and there was freedom of action available to the pilots'. Surprise was a key factor and this was the major factor that ground troops were not heli lifted from Miranshah rather choice of Razmak made the entire operation from flying aspect a matter of few minutes. Formation took off and flew directly towards the intended landing spots, Cobras were already in air and had secured the surrounding areas .

As soon as the landing was accomplished, the Razmak airfield came under intense attack from the Taliban from the surrounding and dominating hills , this thus overruled further insertion of troops in the target area. The dropped force occupied a hideout and spent the night. Bell 412 helicopters flew towards Miranshah.

On 13th September 2007, at 0900 hours, two bell 412 dropped further 20 commandoes at the ridge, the two forces later joined together at what was known as triangular feature. a pair of Cobras took part in it and fire 1690 rounds of cannon'.[3] Captain Sajid Ilyas with his gunner Captain Abdul Qayyum while providing support to the Bell 412 helicopter evacuating casualties came under fire and their Cobra got hit with eleven bullets.[4] Captain Ali Arshad and his co-pilot Captain Usman Akram's Bell was also hit with multiple bullets. Whole day the firing duel with miscreants continued, with own troops trying to establish a foothold. Next day, a further force of 60 soldiers was dropped close to Mana, they after landing establish contact with the already dropped troops. Meanwhile, the miscreants close the circle around the first two parties; night was spent fighting with the Taliban; it was now decided to break the cordon of Taliban and establish contact with the own troops at first light. The contact with own troops was established at the first light, at this stage after assessing the situation, it was decided to capture the Pash Ziarat Post. Firm base was established and reconnaissance of the target was carried out, but they were taken by surprise when at 1830 hours the force found itself being surrounded by Taliban . Now it was a battle for survival, thus the force was divided into four groups , each fighting its own battle and trying to break the cordon of the miscreants

On 16th September, 2007 at 0500 hours the physical assault was carried out by the Taliban, a hand pitched battle ensued, miscreants were pushed back to thirty odd meters from where behind the cover the fire fight continued. Now it was decided to disengage from the battle and find a way out; after seven hours of intense and sporadic fight, own troops started disengaging from the confined area, they were able to extricate themselves and by evening the battle was over. SSG suffered the highest casualties in the current war at Pash Ziarat, fifteen soldiers embraced martyrdom and twelve more were wounded. Two soldiers of 3 Commando Battalion were able to re-join the battalion after few days. They were wounded and had to escape using their wits through the Taliban territory.

The staff work in this operation needs analytical dissection because all the four attack helicopters available at MiranShah were grounded for last three days and remained so for another three days. Aviation fuel was too less, so less that one MI-17 and one Bell 412 despite being serviceable did not had fuel. Later aviation fuel for attack helicopters was transported by helicopters from Bannu and all flying missions were performed from Bannu. The troops were deinducted, replenished, evacuated and supplied by the MI-17 helicopters for at least another seven days. On 29th September 11.6 tons of logistics were heli-transported to Razmak and surrounding posts by MI-17 helicopters.

Later on 14-15 October and also on 16-18 November, Razmak and surrounding areas were supported by Cobras, a total of 1600 rounds of cannon were fired. Another operation was launched for Mana on 10th December 2007, five Cobras participated in it and fired 1320 rounds of cannon .

Army Aviation between January- December 2007 flew 45380 hours out of which 19858 hours were training and 14955 hours were operational. It flew 5524 hours in support of

3 Aviation Combat Base War Diary.
4 Official citation of Captain Sajid Ilyas and Captain Atif Qayyum.

Opeartion Al Mizan, in which Cobras flew 1085.5 hours, Mi-17 logged 2620 hours and Bell 412 had 2242 hours. For Opeartion Destiny , Army Aviation flew 1742 hours in which Cobras flew 390 hours, Mi-17 had 577 hours and Bell 412 logged 746 hours; Puma helicopters were not employed in Al Mizan rather they took part in Opeartion Destiny and flew 27 hours.. In terms of flight safety there were 73 occurences and one fatal accident during the year. It is also worth highlighting that Army Aviation also conducted major relief operation in Balochistan during June and July as heavy rain caused flooding in few districts of the province; 1499 hours were flown in which 52299 kilogram of aid was carried, 5626 persons were evacuated including 19 serious casualties.

2nd January 2008. Major Imran Akhtar and Major Hammad Dabir were detailed to provide aerial cover to the ground troops on a Road Operating Day (ROD). After completion of the mission , pilots decided to practice low level flying over River Kurram; in the process they engaged high tension wires which were rather obscured by the low tress on both banks of the river. The end result of engaging the wires resulted in damage to main rotor hub thus forcing the pilots to land immediately which they did ; in the river bank. Pilots remained safe but Cobar had to be heli lifted.

Eagle Strike – January 2008

Ladha a small town is located between Wana and Razmak, South of Ladha is the village of Kaniguram, and to the North is the small town of Makin (the hometown of Baitullah Mahsud). Towards South of Ladha Village is 'The Old Ladha Fort' built in 1932 and remained as a post of South Waziristan Militia. Ladha Fort. In November 2007 ,fort came under repeated attacks by the militants and terrorists: it came under a siege and supply of fresh food and water was disrupted. During December 2007, South Waziristan Scouts (SWS) repulsed 14 such attacks. Militants were occupying the surrounding hills and nearby houses thus making any ground relief party movement very hazardous. There were 70 scouts commanded by Captain Karim besieged inside the Ladha Fort.

Operation Tri Star was launched on 15th January 2007 to relieve the besieged forts, it was a three pronged advance from Miranshah and Wana, Cobras provided aerial support to the advancing formation yet the objectives were not achieved; situation was becoming critical and this is where the idea of employing Army Aviation was conceived by the field formation with a proposition to use three MI-17 helicopter. Lieutenant Colonel Wajahat Ghuman commanding officer of 35 Combat Squadron was in Miranshah and Major General Azhar GOC 7 Infantry Division put the plan to him for execution. Brigadier Ghuman narrates.

'Till now I had not flown over Ladha Fort, thus first we had to have an aerial reconnaissance, thus myself alongwith GOC 7 Division and Brigadier Samreez Salik artillery commander flew in a Bell 412, we were at 7000 feet when we we were fired upon with 14.5 mm guns from mountainous heights near Makin, we climbed to 9000 feet yet we were getting the splinters inside the helicopter; thus we turned back' . Next day they flew in a Lama helicopter overhead Ladha Fort. After coming back to Miranshah issue of pros and cons of utilising MI-17 and Bell 412 were pondered.. MI-17 had the limitation that with load they were not comfortable in making a hard landing within the small ground available within the Ladha Fort. Thus Bell 412.

was selected. Brigadier Ghuman further highlights that an extensive study of map and mental appreciation all directed to one conclusion that surprise alone can offset the firepower of the miscreants around the Ladha Fort, but the core question was as how to achieve it. I finally presented my plan to the formation commander.

His plan was so bold that from the onset it was initially put aside , yet Lt Col Ghuman kept on pleading and highlighted the impact of the mission when it is over. Finally the plan was approved at the highest level. Plan itself revolved around secrecy, surprise , speed and firepower all synchronised to an extent that militants would be having minimum time to react. The formation of Cobras alongwith either Mi-17 or Bell 412 will fly low , within the narrow high banks of the dry water stream thus avoiding any detection, popping up just short of the Ladha Fort and then landing inside the fort, dropping the replenishment, reinforcement and picking up the casualties and taking off. It also decided to employ bell 412 rather than the MI-17 mainly due to the comparative small size of Bell 412.

Meanwhile extensive rehearsals were carried out at Miransah with focus on the infantry soldiers who were to be taken and dropped at Ladha Fort. These soldiers not only had to get down from the Bell 412 alongwith the required ammunition, water pump motor, food but also to load the six bodies of shaheeds into running rotor helicopters. Bell 412 was stripped of all armour plating in order to increase the payload. Lieutenant Colonel's Ghuman plan envisaged employing three Cobras and two Bell 412, flying within the nap of a water stream (algad)

Militants attacked nearby Sararogha Fort on 16th January 2008, at night with 500-600 militants and overran after stiff resistance by South Waziristan Scouts, sixteen scouts were martyred and other twenty-four were captured by Taliban. The Ladha Fort was attacked by the militants on 18th January 2008, with over 400 miscreants, militants also captured outpost of Splatoi. Own troops which were facing the irregular fire from the adjoining high grounds held the fort despite suffering high casualties, they were now cut off from the main force and only Army Aviation was their last hope. Miscreants reportedly had nine 12.7 mm guns placed in a manner that any landing of air assault was bound to have high degree of casualties. Lieutenant Colonel Ghumman's plan had one psychological aspect, ' I , in my plan had requested that for coming days the artillery should keep pounding the suspected gun positions of militants in order to deny them the sleep and this fire will be stopped an hour before our intended strike time; so that the militants should after prolong awakeness be more inclined towards getting some sleep.

On 20th January 2008, at 0825 hours the formation of three Cobras and two Bell 412 took from Miranshah. They flew five minutes on northerly heading at medium altitude and then set a southerly course towards Ladha. Plan was to fly low and then get into the algad, Formation had to fly within the banks of the stream for thirty minutes in order to avoid detection; two nautical miles short of Ladha Fort to pull up, leader to engage the central and western miscreants guns and No.2 to take on guns on eastern side. Captain Kashif Bhatti (Colonel) was the co-pilot with the leader (Lt Col Ghuman) thus he was responsible for navigation. ' Anxiety was there, main concern were flight hazards while flying within the bounds of semi mountainous banks, as a gunner and navigator my role was critical and there was no room for any error. Our speed within the algad was between 60-70 knots, my captain kept on inquiring about the time, it

was real tense. There was one critical bend near Makin, we had to take a left turn from the junction and this was the most critical aspect of the navigation but we managed to fly the correct path. Ninety seconds short of objective leader pulled up and the Ladha fort was there'. Cobras immediately banked left and right and took on the 12.7 mm gun. while Bell 412 made spectacular landings within the short compound of the fort. Troops rushed out and picked up the casualties and dropped the replenishment. This all was much quicker than anticipated. Colonel Kashif Bhatti recalls that , 'we sprayed 20mms on the suspected sights, captain meanwhile pull up and made a pedal turn and by the time we were straighten and aligned with the Ladha Fort , Bells were already airborne and turning back'. Major Attique Rehman (brigadier) was the captain of Bell- 412 and his helicopter was hit with bullets, his co-pilot Lieutenant Asim Akbar displayed an extraordinary display of airmanship. Cobra flown by Captain Sajid Sati (colonel) alongwith Captain Aurangzeb Azmat also received bullet hits during this mission.

One officer and twelve soldiers alongwith 600 Kilograms of supplies were dropped and six injured soldiers were picked. There were only two bullets hit, one each on Cobra and Bell 412.

Eagle Strike – II

Miscreants reacted to the success of Operation Eagle Strike–I with vengeance. The Laddah fort was attacked by them on the same night. They were successful in over running half of the posts outside fort. Six soldiers embraced shahadat and equal number were critically wounded. Army Aviation had to carryout the repetition of earlier mission and as such same combat team was tasked. ' I had just reached Multan early morning from Rawalpindi on a Daewoo bus, when I reached my home in Fort Colony , a runner was standing with orders from base commander Brigadier Khalid , to report immediately to the base. Later in the day I flew back to Miranshah on a Mushak' recalls Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman.

Since the first mission relied heavily on surprise it was even more difficult to do the same. So number of things had to be changed. The critical points enroute had to be actually neutralised while helicopter flying in the nullah. The time had to be changed and heavy artillery support just prior to approach to the fort was decided. Time for operation was exact Asar prayers time.

On 25 January 2008, formation took off at 1555 hours from Miranshah and followed the same route however once in nullah a critical problem associated with AH-1F almost jeopardized the entire mission. The sun which was low was reflecting from the gunner canopy and was making it impossible to see in front so the flying had to be done keeping the side of nullah in focus. Almost one nautical mile short of the pull up point where the 12.7mm gun was suspected something banged into lead helicopter with a very loud thrust. Brigadier Ghumman narrates,' In the Eagle Strike -1, we had encountered a thick wire across the algad, it was part of a trolley which was being used for crossing the algad by the locals, my gunner Captain Kashif Bhatti was good enough to pick it and warned me in time, however in this mission Captain Aurangzeb Azmat was my gunner and I forgot to highlight him regarding this flight hazard.' Cobra started a circular vibration but it was under control however it was a very tough decision whether to continue the mission or abort it.. It was such a critical moment that if leader aborted the mission, No 2 was not in a position to suppress all the AA Guns in target area hence the entire mission had to be aborted..

The formation entered the Ladha Fort zone this time the miscreants were ready and the amount of fire exchange was immense. Cobras after suppressing the militants fire made pedal turns and to the surprise of leader the Bell's were still on ground. It almost took five minutes for Bell-412 helicopters to take six shaheeds and wounded who were tucked behind wall as they were receiving heavy fire from the Western direction. Cobras engaged these three positions with cannon and under this fire the Bell-412 managed to take off. The formation landed back at Miran Shah at 1800 hours much to the relief of everyone.

Three days later General Kayani decorated Lieutenant Colonel Wajahat Ghumman with a Tamgha Basalat at Miransha**h**

Forward Operating Base (FOB)- September 2008

From the inception of operations in the FATA, the aviation assets within 11 Corps area were coordinated by 9 Army Aviation Squadron and the G-1 Aviation in the Corps headquarters. Qasim Army Aviation Base and Combat Group were the main components of aviation efforts within the 11 Corps. Military Operations Directorate had assured ten Cobras and equal number of cargo helicopters to the 11 Corps. Colonel Asif Jah (brigadier retired) was the first FOB Commander, he narrates, on 1st September 2008, I landed at Peshawar airport on a routine Y-12 sortie, Major Chanzeb who was performing the duties of a liaison officer received me and this is how it started. I was part of 101 Aviation Base, I reported to 11 Corps HQ where Colonel GS was looking after army aviation, I was offered to have a office within the Corps HQ but I preferred to stay and work from the flight line. Initially as FOB we worked from the crew room of 9 Squadron , later had a small store as our office and finally we shifted to present location which were abandoned quarter guards. Corps installed the necessary communication systems too. First priority was to ensure the accommodation of the crew, it was vital to have them placed collectively. Brigadier Amir Riaz (lieutenant general retired) was the COS and he played a great role in the overall establishment and ensuring efficiency of FOB. Within days, I as commander FOB was made part of the Corps daily briefing conducted every evening.

Situation on ground was that we had a flight each at Wana and Miranshah comprising of two Cobras each alongwith one MI-17 and one Bell 412. There were six Cobras parked at Peshawar alongwith four Bell 412. overall there were 44 pilots within the operational area and they all were on fortnightly rotation from their squadrons which included 21, 27, 31, 33, 35 squadrons. At Tarbela (Ghazi Base) we had a EME maintenance company.

The ground situation was as under; Bajaur Scouts were under siege, there was unrest in Swat where 17 Infantry Division was deployed undercommand Major General Nasir Janjua (lieutenant general retired). 7 Infantry Division was at Miranshah and 9 infantry Division aws at Wana alongwith 40 infantry Division at Dera Ismail Khan (it was rotated with 14 Infantry Division) similarly 17 Infantry Division was rotated with 37 Infantry Division. A Shangla Task Force was also created it was infact a infantry brigade of X Corps placed under command 11 Corps, being commanded by Brigadier Ajab Gul.

Apart from regular skirmishes at SWA and NWA the focus of Army Aviation operation was now on Buner, Malakand, Bajaur and Swat. Khyber, and Kurram were rather quiet. There

were regular sorties for crew change, casualty evacuation, critical ammunition of Cobras and troops relief missions. Ground operations were classified in two broad categories namely Army Operations, in which Frontier Corps troops were under command of army formation and other was FC Operation in which army troops were under command to FC; Bajaur was a FC Operation whereas Swat and Buner were Army Operations.

Operation Rah-e-Raast (2007-2009)

In 2008, miscreants and militants started challenging the writ of state and thus **Operation Rah-e-Raast** was launched in April 2009. During this operation 1749 flying hours and 270 TOWs,705 rockets and 132500 rounds of cannon were fired. Operations in Swat in earnest started from the mid October 2007 and continued intermittingly till 2009. Swat covers an area of 5,337 square Kilometres, valley was a former princely state and is bounded by Chitral and Ghizar Districts in North, Kohistan and Shangla Districts in East, Buner and Malakand Districts in South, Lower and Upper Dir Districts in the West.

Buner is a small mountainous valley with an area of 1,865 square Kilometres. It is bounded on the North by Swat District, Mardan District in South and River Indus and Hazara Division. Taliban established their foothold in the area thus in April 2009, Operation Rah-e-Raast was launched. 105.3 Flying hours were generated with 72 TOWs, 172 rockets and 44372 rounds of cannon being expended.

Bajaur political agency is the smallest among all political agencies having an area of… Khar is the administrative capital of the agency. Bajaur shares a 52 Kilometres border with Afghanistan (Kunar Province). Bajaur is exclusively inhabited by Tarkani Pashtuns and the main sub tribes in agency are Utman Khel, Tarkkalani, Mamund (Kakazai, Wur, Salarzai) as well as small population of Safi tribe. Main militant groups in the agency are Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Tehreek Jaish Islami Pakistan and Moulvi Abdullah group. Operations namely Sher Dil was launched in 2008 and Operation Bajaur was conducted in 2012. Combat Group flew a total of 520 hours during which 35 TOWs, 50 rockets and 9000 rounds of cannon were fired.

Operation Sher Dil (October 2008) Battle of Bajaur

Battle of Bajaur - October 2008. is officially known as Operation Sher Dil, it was launched by Frontier Corps supported by a brigade of army. In September and October 2008, the operation reached its apex when 35 Combat Squadron was detailed to undertake the combat responsibilities.

A series of operations took place in Bajaur from August 2008 and lasted till December 2008 known as Operations Sherdil 1-5[5] these operations lasted from August –December 2008. Aim was to open the main road from Torghandi to Nawagai. The operations started in Bajaur when miscreants and militants siege the FC post at Loi Sum. The post itself is important as it is on a track junction and therefore checks movement across the border into Kunar province of

5 Pakistan Army Museum Gallery -5 Lahore.

Afghanistan. Cobras were inducted at this stage of the battle to clear the areas of miscreants. Cobras had a difficult task , first and foremost was the identification of the foe. The six feet high maize crop was a major hiding place and as such burst of cannon were fired into the crops. Taliban movement in the rear were also hit with rockets and five TOWs were fired on the suspected militant hideouts. By 27th September 2008, a link was established with Loe Sum.

Sherdil - 6. On 22nd December 2008, the operation was launched with an aim to relief the Lakaro post, which was already being provisioned with helicopters. Cobras were providing the combat escort to the cargo helicopters in this operations. Colonel Nauman Saeed Commandant Bajaur Scouts , himself led from the front, so was Major General Tariq Khan IGFC, who refused to take his flag down from his jeep in the operational area , as advised by many. Bajaur was one of the most hard fought battles of the Al Mizan. Militants were eager to keep their foothold firm and army and militia determined to get rid of this menace once and for all. Cobras played a decisive role in the winning of the battle, they flew low and high depending upon the situation. They would land at first light at Khar, get the briefing from the commandant and then carry out all day long close support sorties. ' operations against the miscreants were at its peak in Bajaur agency during September and October 2008. in recognition of profound display of courage on part of all Mustangs, Commandant Bajaur gave them thr title of Terror of the Skies'.

Swat a princely state formed in 1922 and abolished in 1969. Swat is considered as a Switzerland of Pakistan because of its scenic beauty. Commando battalion was in position at Kanju fort since 22nd October 2007. The Taliban offensive which was launched on 24th October targeting the police and para military organization did achieved its aim, by 7th November 2007, Taliban were in control of Madyn, Kabal and Khawaza Khela tehsils and towns.. Close battles were fought between the infantry and the Taliban, finally in February 2009, a peace accord was signed between the Taliban and the government. Soon this peace pact was broken by the Taliban when they abducted four commandos who were under cover, they later killed all of them.

On 31st October 2007, Cobras were employed for the very first time in Swat, at 1230 hours one Cobra and one Bell 412 were used, again at 1515 hours two Cobras were employed in area south of Pir Kalai. On 1st November 2007, militants launched physical attack on the post. From 0810-1610 hours three engagements were carried out by Cobras.. Major Suhail Khan and Major Imaad landed at Kabal on 12th November 2007, in Cobra 016; it was the first landing of Cobras in Swat and the start of an intense campaign. Two Cobras piloted by Major Nabeel Khan, Major Raza, Major Tanveer Abbasi and Major Razi alongwith one MI-17 and one Bell 412 were placed at Kabal. Matta police station was the first target as it had been taken over by the Taliban.

In the winter of 2007-2008, militants got hold of Najia Top which is adjacent to the Swat airfield and thus disrupted the convoy movement of military, it was neutralized with the employment of two Cobras, one Bell 412; they supported the infantry which was climbing up to clear the top. Militants had established strongholds at the top making use of a causeway. Cobras supported the assault 'we fired initially rockets on the militant hideouts as it is an area weapon, the layout and terrain was such that I had to come in from a slanting direction and the other Cobra made frontal pass. One TOW was also fired and from the smoke it created

it was obvious that we had hit the ammunition dump of the militants'. A classic engagement was carried out by the Major Jawad Hanif and Major Muazzam on Cobra. Commandos were carrying out clearing operation at Kabal on 8th August 2008, during the cleanup, a party of six commandos was entrenched in a house and were besieged from all corners and adjacent houses. Later the commandos were able to break through the cordon with Cobra providing intimate close support by hovering and firing through the narrow alley.

In the period between July 2007- June 2008, Army Aviation flew 45,993-7 hours , out of these 14074-9 hours were operational and 22318.7 were for training purpose. For Operation AlMizan a total of 5946 hours were flown while for Operations in Southern Command only 494 hours were consumed. Bell 412 did the maximum flying logging 2378 hours in Opeartion Almizan and another 270 hours in Southern Command (Operation Falcon which was conducted in general area Kalgiri and Singhai between 26-30 June 2008, Opeartion Falcon 1 which aws in area Kahan between 11-13 February and operation in Uch between 20-22 July 2008); followed by Mi-17 which logged 1390 hours in Al Mizan and 98 odd hours in Destiny. Cobras flew 1796 hours as part of Opeartion Al Mizan and 72 hours during Opeartion Destiny. in terms of engagements , there were 120 engagements conducted in the period. 159 TOWs were fired during Opeartion Al Mizan alongwith 344 rockets and1,18,830 rounds of cannon. No TOW or rockets were fired in Opeartion Destiny rather 3,570 rounds of cannon were consumed.

Apart from operations, Army Aviation took active part in the earth quake affected areas of Balochistan and flood relief operation in District Rajanpur. A total of 44.1 hours were flown in which 26,655 Kilograms of supplies were transported, 264 people were evacuated alongwith 16 casulties.

In terms of training, 20 pilots of Cobra were trained on simulator at USA and 22 pilots of Mi-17 underwent simulator training at UAE. 60 Aviation Squadron (Strategic Production Division SPD) was raised in 2008 with three Bell 412 helicopters.

2008 was marked as Year of Soldier, bases and squadrons made extarordinary efforts to make the year live upto its purpose. Soldiers Mess, living accomodation, recreational facilities, family accomodation were refurbished, renovated and where required repaired. Competitions among squadrons were held in this regard. Overall the quality and scale of ration was almost doubled for the soldiers. Another key feature of the year 2008 was the inaugral flight of C-130 at Wana and also the steps taken by Army Aviation under which civillians were also ferried without any cost between Miranshah and Peshawar ; as part of goodwill steps.

Year 2009 – Peo Chaar

Dir District is 5,282 square Kilometres in area, administratively it is part of Malakand Division. Dir was a princely state in the past, it is located between Chitral and Peshawar. Almost entire district lies in Panjkora Valley which raises high in Hindukush and joins the Swat River near Chakdara. Apart from tehsils of Adenzai and Munda, the remaining area is rugged and mountainous with peaks rising to 16000 feet in north-east. Swat lies to the east and Afghanistan to the west of Dir. Timergarah is the district headquarters and have an altitude of 2,700 feet.

On 26th April 2009, Operation Rah-e-Raast was launched after the miscreants violated the peace pact, thereby attacking convoys of Frontier Corps and other government officials. As a matter of fact, entire district was besieged and cut off from the rest of the country and writ of the state was blatantly challenged. Combat Group flew 55.3hours in Dir and in the engagements fired 36 TOWs, 86 rockets and 21036 rounds of cannon.

Operation Peo Char, 12th May 2009

The final solution of unrest in Swat was in carrying military operation, flushing out the Taliban and their supporters, to destroy the training centres and hub of militancy; above all to take a moral ascendency in the campaign by hitting at the very villages of the so-called leaders of militancy. Peochar is a valley which is located north of Mingora, west of Matta and NE of Shahdheri. It is a narrow valley, surrounded by high peaks with steep gradients. Elevation varies from 4000 – 6500 feet in the valley and from 6500 – Over 10,000 feet along the surrounding peaks. The valley is surrounded in the north by Prangman Sar and Dandai Sar, in the East by Uchrai Sar, in the south by Guzano Sar, Shalkho Sar and in the west by Banmanai Sar. The access to the valley is from the east which is served with metaled road which offshoots from Mingora-Dir road.

Operations in Swat in earnest started from the mid October 2007 and continued intermittingly till 2009. 3 Commando battalion was in position at Kanju fort since 22nd October 2007. The Taliban offensive which was launched on 24th October targeting the police and para military organisation did achieved its aim, by 7th November 2007, Taliban were in control of Madyn , Kabal and Khawaza Khela tehsils and towns. In the second week of November, Taliban tried to wrest the Shangla District, which is on east of Swat. This advance was checked by own army and Taliban were pushed back into Swat; by end November , Taliban went underground. Close battles were fought between the infantry and the Taliban, finally in February 2009, a peace accord was signed between the Taliban and the government. Soon this peace pact was broken by the Taliban when they abducted four commandos who were under cover, they later killed all of them. As a result a final push was launched in Swat

Outline of Army Plan. Army started **Op Raah-e-Raast in May 2009** with the final approval of Parliament. 19 Div, 37 Div, Shangla Task Force and SSG to clear the Swat Valley. The design of military operations hinged on following lines:- **37 Infantry Division**. To operate in Situ i.e Lower Swat along Malakand - Mingora - Kabal axis. The base of opeartion was to be at Mingora. The valley was to be cleared uptill Shah Dheri and Charbagh simultaneously and estblished a linkup with SSG at Peochar and with 19 Infantry Division at Khawaza Khela. **19 Infantry Division**.To operate in area Upper Swat and Shangla. The axis assigned to 19 Division was Besham – Shangla – Khwazakhela – Piochar linking up with SSG in Peochar after clearing the area, to secure Main Supply Route. **Special Services Group**. SSG was to clear Peochar Valley through vertical envelopment as main effort of Pakistan Army in sync with 19 and 37 Divisions. They were also to neutralised the high value targets in the process. **Army Aviation**, had the task to provide logistic and close combat support to 19 and 37 Infantry Divisions alongwith Frontier Corps. Apart from operations in Swat Valley, Army Aviation was supporting the operations of 7 and 9 Infantry Divisions in Nort and South Waziristan. However the main effort was to heli drop commando battalions at Peo Char. Overall a high secrecy was maintained regarding the Peo Char Operation by the GHQ

Army Aviation was informed around a fortnight before the actual launching that an operation is imminent but exact location and day was kept in secrecy. On 6th May 2009, Colonel Tahir Masood the commander of 21 Army Aviation Squadron was informed about the impending event. He along with GOC SSG carried out an aerial reconnaissance of the Swat and Peo Char Valley. Colonel Tahir selected the landing zones for helicopters. ' Entire area is wooded and as such only three landing zones were selected, No.1 was the highest and No.2 and No.3 were two-three hundred feet lower…I took pictures of the area and landing zones with the help of a small camera. '. An intense preparation started with MO Directorate providing all kinds of maps and update regarding the miscreants positions. liaison with nearby SSG highlighted that it is going to be the biggest heli borne operation in the history of both army aviation and SSG; no less than five SSG battalions had to be heli dropped and then to be logistically supported for the entire duration and how long will be this duration was not known. From the onset it was clear and obvious that it is going to be a Mi-17 operation as Bell 412 lacks the power to land at such heights with troops and so were the Pumas mainly due to their low serviceability. Therefore Mi-17 including PAF,. Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), 50 BSP Huey-II were gathered at Tarbela.

Bell 412 had the responsibility to act as casualty and rescue operation, no less than 9 Bell 412s arrived at Tarbela alongwith 12 Cobras, one Puma. thirteen Mi-17 and three Huey II.; all in all there were around forty helicopters and their assorted crew including maintenance setup. Colonel Tahir Masood was the commander and responsible for the conduct of operations.

Army Aviation Plan of Peo Char

Task given to Army Aviation was to heli drop five battalions , each battalion having 350 commandoes and to logistically support them . Basing on this directive, Colonel Tahir carried out his appreciation and prepared his verbal orders. total troops to be helilifted were 1650, weight of each soldier was calculated as 100 Kilograms, load carrying capacity of Mi-17 at 8000 feet landing zone was around 1500 kilograms, fuel for Mi-17 was calculated as 1600 litres which provides around two hours of endurance. It was also decided to establish two forward operating bases, one at Daggar and other at Kabal. The daily fuel requirement was calculated as 60,000 litres at Tarbela and 8000 litres at Daggar.

After much consideration and mid night oil burning, it was decided that , eleven Mi-17 would be employed in three waves thus heli dropping around 450 commandoes on day one. Artillery and PAF to soften up the target area before the actual heli landing, Cobras to provide close support during the landings of the Mi-17. To keep secrecy and to retain surprise, direct route to objective would be avoided . There are major chances of heavy resistance from miscreants thus casualty evacuation and recovery has to be catered; above all it was decided that mission is important and has to be undertaken despite all odds.

Preliminarie Operations were launched before clearance of Swat Valley. **Operation Buner** was launched to interdict and destroys miscreants move towards District of Hazara. This operation was conducted under Frontier Corps. Yaldrum battalion minus and company ex

Powindahs had to be inserted through helicopters at Daggar. Capture of Daggar was the key for the success of subsequent operations in the Swat. This was the a classic SOTF operation which went like a text book from inception to execution. Commando battalion was inserted amidst small arms fire at designated landing zones, assault teams secured the landing zones thus allowing the second vic to land. 4 Mi-17s were employed supported by flight of Cobras . Operation commenced wef 1 May landing grounds and key areas were secured and successful link was established with own forces around Daggar on 4 May 2009. 3 Commando Battalion was de-inducted from Bunair on 6 May.

On 6 May 2009, Lieutenant Haseeb Ullah Qureshi as gunner of Cobra helicopter , was tasked to engage miscreant ' dugouts directly pitched in gross fire with Headquarters 88 Brigade at Mingora. On the direction of ground commander, he effectively engaged the miscreants, causing heavy casualties. Thereafter, he engaged miscreants vehicles evacuating the casualties and effectively rescued two convoys of own troops through precise aerial strikes.

On 7 May 2009, he again effectively engaged miscreants surrounding Matta Police Station, A concentration in Sherplam and another target east of Matta. Despite stiff resistance by the miscreants in an attempt to shoot down the helicopter, he successfully achieved the desired effects. During the process, the helicopter sustained four small arms hits. The officer provided an effective air cover to own troops flying nine and sic hours on 6th and 7th May 2009 respectively, firing 15 x TOWs

During the operations in Swat Vallley in the Summer of 2009, the 101 Army Aviation Group alongwith 404 Combat Group were assembled at Tarbela. Extensive rehearsals were carried out by the Army Aviation. GOC Army Aviation Major General Tanveerullah, Base Commander 101 Group Brigadier Amir alongwith all commanding officers were present at Tarbela. It was primarily a CGS operation as 11 Corps was also undertaking similar operations in different parts notably NWA, and SWA . FOB was retained at Peshawar and as such it played little role in PeoChar. The operations in Swat valley from Army Aviation perspective were no different from the operations already conducted, rather due to low altitude of Swat mountains it was flying friendly, weather in terms of low clouds posed a potent threat more than the ground fire. Core issue was the heli dropping of the commando battalions at different heights through MI-17 helicopters, it was anticipated that militants will put up a stiff resistance thus the necessity of having Cobras being in air to provide close support to the landing MI-17s. Therefore major area of appreciation was how to ensure the safety of heli-formation. It was also anticipated that commandos would be requiring casualty evacuation and replenishment during the initial days of operations.

Pilots and ground gathered at Ghazi Airbase almost a week before the commencement of the operation. Pilots were housed at Ghazi and had to travel to the base. A night before the operation a detail briefing was given to all the pilots. Ground crew had a gigantic task to carryout daily inspection of the aircraft. Cobra takes two and half hour of inspection, ammunition was loaded. Lieutenant Colonel Irfan Hassan was commanding 33 Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel

Rana Abbas was commanding 31 Squadron and Lieutenant Colonel Wajahat Ghumman was commanding the 35 Squadron. Colonel Asif Jah was the forward operating base commander.

At dawn of 12th May 2009, eleven Mi-17s , ten Cobras, three Bell 412 started their engines and the air of Ghazi air base was filled with resonating sound; to pilots this is the most cherished noise, it has its own rhythm and without any composer it still gives the feeling of a symphony. The rotor noise of three different types of helicopters Ground crew has been up and they had carried out the pre flight checks.

Cobras took off at 0550 hours from Ghazi and as per plan they had to first neutarlised the landing zone for ten minutes, provide close support to the first wave of eleven Mi-17 and then remained in air for another forty minutes before falling to Daggar for refuelling and rearmament. Only 450 rounds of cannons were armed. Similarly for next wave of Mi-17 same procedure and protection has to be provided but with rather less time.

Mi-17s took off at 0605, with Colonel Tahir as formation leader. Route in was to maintain 5500 feet till Bat Khela then climb to 9000 feet, following Ghazi-Swabi-Rustam-Timar Garha-Kandao Pass and onward to objective . 2 Nautical miles west of Kandao Pass was designated as holding area.

In the first wave led by ColonelTahir with Major Tahir as his co-pilot, followed by Major Solat with Captain Zulfiqar . Lieutenant Colonel Chanzeb with Captain Zeeshan; leading vick had to land at the three designated landing zones , followed by another vick of three Mi-17s in which Major Kashif alongwith his co-pilot Major Asif to act as leader alongwith Major Asad and Captain Khabeer, Captain Mudassar and Captain Waseem, in the third vick were Captain Shuaib and Captain Musharaf, Captain Rizwan and Captain Zeeshan and Major Ahmad and Captain Irfan. Fourth vick had only two Mi-17s piloted by Major Farooq and Captain Irfan alongwith Major Shahid and Lieutenant Saad.

Lieutenant Colonel Irfan was leading the formation of three Cobras with him was Captain Junaid, Major Zubair and Major Naqvi were the wingman alongwith Major Mujtaba and Captain Babur. ‘We were maintaining 4500 feet indicated, each Cobra had 300 rounds of cannon, eight rockets and two TOWs with full fuel. Ghazi to Daggar we flew low, at 105 Knots it took us 25 minutes, from here onwards we climb and took another 27 minutes to reach Peochar’ recalls formation leader. This formation was followed by a formation of MI-17. Cobras had to secure the landing zones.

PAF were as per plan had to carryout strikes and to leave the area by 0655; however as the formation initiated approach the last of the PAF jet fired a bomb which obscure the landing area with cloud. Colonel Tahir recalls that from one kilometres and around about 1000 meters height , I lost the contact with the heli pad due to this cloud, there aws no other option and relying upon instruments I kept flying and it was close to 200 meters short of landing zone 1 that I had visual contact. Mi-17s made text book landing and SSG troops also got down

Lt Gen Mustafa CGS with Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah GOC Army Aviation & Pilots who took part in PeoChar

Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah GOC Army Aviation with Pilots at Ghazi

within the stipulated time. Lieutenant Colonel Chanzeb had to land at the LZ-3, ' I maintained a sliding approach and was in line with the helipad which was partially visible.. quickly after dropping the commandoes I pulled up the Mi-17 and now it had lots of power thus no major issue, we as a vick then set course for Ghazi , and landed back at 0750 hours'.On day one of the operation, 488 troops alongwith 3600 Kilograms of load were dropped. Seven casulties were also picked up by the Mi-17 from LZ-1 and LZ-2, overall Mi-17s flew 35 sorties and consumed 68 hours of flying. Bell 412 which also acted as Air Battle Captain with GOC Major General Tanveerullah monitoring the situation; Bell flew 17 hours on this day. Cobras flew 39 hours and fired only cannons (3830 rounds). The only critical aspect was that LZ-3 had been compromised as it came under intense fire from miscreants and SSG troops had to secure it. One Mi-17 piloted by Major Farooq Ahmed with Captain Rizwan as his co-pilot was hit with a small arms bullet. One NCO of 5 Commando Battalion got injured. Evacuation of the injured soldier was an uphill and challenging task. In the process of evacuation six more soldiers got injured including Captain Imran Niazi who received bullet on his shoulder; later all these casualties were evacuated in a Mi-17 and flown to Peshawar.

The perspective of SSG troops which were landed is highlighted by Naik Shams he got his SSG Wing in 2006. " At night we move in trucks from Attock to Ghazi air base, where at first light we took off, I was part of the tactical headquarters as an intelligence operator, my job was to keep the maps updated. We had to jump from the helicopters at the target area,, some commandos would jump with the load , other would first throw the pack and then jump. It was a long ridge, immediately after landing we rolled and took cover behind the trees. The designated companies and troops than moved down the valley, soon second wave of own troops landed in similar pattern. There was sporadic fire coming from the miscreant, but it was accurate. By evening our own sniper detected the Taliban sniper and neutralised him, he was on a tree. I myself alongwith the khateeb of the battalion had taken cover behind the tree, when we moved forward, a bullet hit the trunk of the next tree, thus we both jumped into a water tank. At the top there was a hut alongwith the water tank, we made our tactical headquarters in the same hut. Myself and khateeb thus remained in a cold water for well over an hour and then we decided to get out , otherwise we will freeze to death . We just bolted out in two different directions without any fire coming on us.'

Kabal was selected as the FAARP, another FAARP was established at Daggar. first wave flew 2.5 Hours and landed back for refuelling and after half an hour was airborne again. Thus throughout the day constant Cobra cover was ensured over the target. Cobra mostly conducted speculated fire and landed back at Ghazi before sunset.

On the very first night (12/13 May 2009) 1 Commando Battalion located on Banmanai Sar was physically attacked . Two soldiers embraced Shahadat during encounter, while seventeen miscreantst were killed and reportedly 40 were injured. **On 13th May 2009**, operation continued as per the plan which was to drop another 400 commandoes 170 soldiers of 5 Commando Battalion and 325 soldiers of 6 Commando Battalion, LZ-3 being compromised thus operation revolved around the other two landing pads. Captain Farhaj Ali with his co-pilot Captain

Musharaf Aslam had just touched down at the LZ-3, when the tail rotor was hit by miscreants with a burst of 12.7mm gun, helicopter immediately starting loosing tail power and started circling, hitting the trees and nestling down with a broken tail boom. Unfortunately two soldiers , one an artillery observer and other a soldier from Army Medical Corps lost their lives, 14 soldiers of SSG and own crew members received injuries. Despite this setback, operation continued and by the end of day, 468 commandos and 6800 Kilograms of load was dropped and more importantly 11 casualties and dead bodies of four shaheeds were also carried off. Casualty evacuation is the morale boosting factor, the assurance that I will be evacuated in case of an injury raises the morale of troops to sky high. This operation undertaken by pilots amidst volley of small arms fire is worth appreciating; Mi-17 remains exposed to hostile fire during this critical phase. Cobras flew 44 hours and fired six TOWs and eight rockets alongwith 7380 rounds of cannon.

After the crash of Mi-17 it was felt that a more professional approach is required at the landing zones, thus the requirement of a dedicated ATC. Main issue was the veering of the wind which can offset any approach by turning a headwind into tailwind. Major Alta fur Rehman of 21 Squadron volounteered to land at the Peo Char and to act as the SATCO in the area. He landed in the last vic at the ridge. He narrates, Anxiety is a natural phenomenon, while flying the focus is on the helipad and the appropriate approach, any mistake can be fatal not only for own but for the soldiers inside the helicopter as well and it can jeopardize the whole operation. After landing , I just rush to take cover behind a tree, there were sporadic fire going on. I managed to stay a night with SSG troops. I taught them on how to indicate the changing wind pattern to the pilots. I found them very cheerful and hospitable even in such stressful envoirnment. Next day I took a return flight in a Mi-17.; mission was accomplished.

On **14th May 2009,** intense battle raged , slowly and gradually the miscreants were being forced to squeeze, own troops after securing the heights were now hunting the militants who were now taking shelter among the builtup areas and using women and children as human shield. Yet there was fog of war, miscreants were still hiding among the woods and causing sporadic fire. Mi-17s dropped 32 commandos and 10,500 kilograms of load. Cobras fired 19 TOWs, 33 rockets and 3300 rounds of cannon fire. Bell 412 flew 20 hours and evacuated three casulties. On 15th and 16th May the action continued with SSG consolidating its gain and clearing the area. On **16 May**, 53 soldiers ex 3 Commando Battalion were safely landed on LZ-1.

Apart from main operation at Peochar, the miscreants hideout at adjoining areas was also under punishment. The Taliban sympathisers were trying to gather support and to harass own troops. On 14th May 2009, Major Khalid Rashid Maooz was assigned an to engage miscreants concentration on axis area Sultanwas, Kalapani of Buner, Concentration was located in the foot Hills of Kalapani valley, where presence of 300 miscreants along with SPG-, Rocket launchers and 12.7 MM Anti Aircraft gun were reported. Major Khalid Maooz had just landed at Daggar after a successful engagement of miscreants and Cobra was being hot armed when an intelligence officer appeared at the helipad and told Major Maooz regarding the target area.

Major Maooz had some reservation and they were resolved through the satellite phone call with his seniors. ‘ As we took off, Kalpani is about seven minutes flying time, the target indicated to me on ground was a mosque thus I had some apprehensions, when I reached overhead the Kalpani, I saw a building with mosque, what was perplexing was the number of shoes outside the building, it was not prayer times. Thus I engaged the target area and my suspicion proved correct , militants were using the mosque as a headquarters He landed back at Daggar exhausted but day was not yet over for him, as the militants at Kalpani whom he had taken on earlier were now gathering in much more strength at same spot.

He received another SOS call that two tanks had been disabled due to SPG-9 fire. The officer keeping view the nature of distress took off immediately and militant posts were accurately engaged who were not allowing ground troops to recover the tanks and causalities. At this critical moment one of our own tanks was in danger falling into the hands of miscreants. The tanks were not recoverable and on the order of sector commander the tank was destroyed by pilot firing a TOW missile. The engagement at dusk was the most fruitful one, where Major Khalid 20 minutes before last light, again with full pay load engaged the miscreants’ position as now again they had reassembled to recover the casualties and weapons. These engagements with 12 x TOW Missiles, 25 x rockets and 1200 x Cannon rounds in six hours time resulted in severe losses to miscreants in terms of more than 150 causalities, destruction of ammunition dump and entrenched positions without collateral damage to locals. Major Khalid Rashid Maooz was awarded TBt on his outstanding display of courage, airmanship and dedication to the cause.

Army was finally able to bring peace into the troubled valley, slowly and gradually the militants were forced to surrender or face elimination. Local population which by nature is peace loving and have more liberal views as compare to tribal agencies , rejoiced with relief . Cobra pilots narrate how the people would rush to their roofs to wave at the pilots waving hands and dupattas . In one particular instance Major Imaad and Major Jawad Hanif were so move with one particular house that they visited it with sweets and thanked the family for their support. Ground and maintenance crew deserves as much appreciation as possible. Ammunition and fuel at FAARP was transported through the MI-17 helicopters, every entry in the helicopters was rectified by these technicians working under adverse environment, throughout the night.

Between 12th May -18 May 2009, Army Aviation heli lifted 2262 troops and dropped 36,400 Kilograms of load. SSG’s War Diary notes, **Aviation Support**. It was the biggest and most difficult Hel Borne opeartion in the history of Pakistan Army. The selfless dedication, motivation and professionalism of Aviation Command and pilots was beyond any question. Extensive and bold employment of aviation during induction phase and intimate fire/logistic support throughout the conduct of opeartion were the major contributing factors in the success of operation.

21 Quick Reaction Squadron .(QRS) was the mainstay of the operation supported by 4, Mi-17s of 27 King Birds Squadron. all in all 15 Mi-17s were employed in Operation Peo Char.

12 Bell 412, which included four from 4 Squadron and eight Bells from 25 squadron. There wewre five Cobras each from 31 and 33 Combat squadron and 4 from 35 Combat squadron. One Puma from 24 Squadron, one Mi-17 from PAF, 4 UH-2H from 50 squadron alongwith one Cessna Caravan. One Ecureil of 5 Squadron and One Lama of 9 Squadron took part in this historic operation.

During Operation Rah-e Raast which lasted from 5 May 2009- 9 August 2009, 5548 hours were flown, Cobras flew the maximum hours logging 2159 followed by Bell 412 which flew 1525 hours, Mi-17 flew 1194 hours apart from Puma , Y-12, Ecureil and Huey II. 271 TOWs were fired alongwith 705 rockets and 132,475 rounds of cannon. almost half a million kilogram of load was transported, 8749 troops were transported and 481 casualties were evacuated by Army Aviatiors.

3rd July 2009 , A Tragic Day

3rd July 2009 was Friday, Captain Suhail Akbar alongwith his co-pilot Captain Khurram Shahzad took off from Ghazi airfield in Mi-17 No.58635 with a flight plan to first land at Peshawar, pick up few media persosn for a visit to Swat and then after bringing them back to Peshawar ; to carryout another mission to Parachinar and back to Peshawar. They completed te first half of their mission and again took off for Paarchinar with full fuel. They carried out transporatation of troops from tahl to Parachinar and were now all set for their sortie back to hiome base. It aws Ramzan and eid leaves of troops had started thus there was immense pleading and request from them to be accommodated on the flight back to Peshawar. All in all there were 37 soldiers on board alongwith five crew members. Weather was dicey thus Cherat Control gave a diversion to proceed direct through Orakzai Agency. There were intelligence reports of militant AA weapons at Giljo. Mi-17 as it flew close to Chapri Feroz Khel was fired upon by the militants who were occupying the heights and helicopter was arther flying below. The standard operating procedure was to fly at an altitude of 3000 feet AGL however it was not followed.

Colonel Asif Jah was the FOB Commander and he narrates ‘ Just after the Juma prayers I got the news that Mi-17 is missing and then , that it has crashed. Immediately, we boarded a Ecureil of 9 Squadron piloted by Major Fazl Rabbi and reached the crashed site. It was 20 nautical miles short of Peshawar. Smoke was there on the site, we tried to land the helicopter close to crash site but we were fired upon and Major Fazle Rabbi initiated go around; we made few more attempts but to no avail.

Later Cobras were called upon in order to clear the area so that dead bodies can be recovered. Captain (lieutenant colonel) Naqi of Cobra recalls that just a night prior to the crash, Captain Suhail who happened to be his course mate treated me to a grand dinner at Tarbela. Mahsud Scouts and an infantry battalion was moved into the area under the protection of Cobras. By next afternoon, the dead bodies were brought to the CMH Peshawar. All in all 42 soldiers including two officers lost their lives. It is the single most tragic accident in the history of Pakistan Army Aviation todate.

On 11 October 2009, miscraentss launched a terrorist attack on GHQ, for which an immediate launching of SOTF was ordered. The response of 21 Army Aviation Squadron (QRS) was phenomenal, as the helicopters were airborne in ten minutes after the word go 'ahead'.

General Headquarters Rescue Operation- October 2009

On the morning of 10th October 2009 at 1000 hours a white high roof van stopped in front of GHQ Gate No.1, there were nine men sitting wearing army uniform and looked like army soldiers from their haircut. The security persons, at GHQ are civilians and mostly retired army soldiers; there was a backup of an infantry company as well. The men simply got out and started firing indiscriminately all around. The security responded with retaliation fire in which four miscreants died on the spot. Rest of the attacking group rushed in the GHQ and occupied the nearest building which happened to be that of Military Intelligence. A conference was underway, Brigadier Anwar and Lieutenant Colonel Waseem came out to inquire about the noises, they were shot dead by the miscreants. The surviving five miscreants now turned the building into a stronghold, a serious crisis have taken birth.

Zarrar was informed about the impending situation, within an hour the Zarrar was landing in the under construction Military Hospital ground; they came in two teams undercommand Lieutenant Colonel Rizwan Lashari. ' after landing, my teams as per the training and procedures took up their positions, we were taken on vehicles into GHQ, where army chief was also present, I was informed about the situation, in return I assured everyone that Zarrar will live upto the reputation. The immediate Action (IA) teams under Major Shoaib Butt, Captain Amir Shahzad, Captain Wasim Barkatullah and the sniper team under Captain Hasan Zia took position, apart from these officers there wee 40 Zarrar soldiers. '. In the follow up a company of 4 Commando also reached the GHQ.

The mastermind and leader of the militant gang was Aqeel alias Doctor Usman, he had enrolled in army medical corps in 2003 and deserted it in 2005, the demands of the militants included release of 113 high level miscreants, safe passage to south Waziristan Agency on helicopter, later the militants added the demand for food and live media coverage. There were 43 hostages with the militants. During breaching of the building to find Doctor Usman, the roof collapsed, thus all nine members of the assault team came under the debris, resultantly four soldiers embraced shahadat. In this cloud of debris, the nine hostages came out, one of them thanking the God and the army for saving his life; he was moving away, when one of the hostage shouted ' he is Doctor Usman, do not let him go'. Thus the ring leader of the attack on GHQ was apprehended and handed over to the intelligence agencies.

Operation Rah –E – Nejat-October 2009

Sequel to successful operations Swat and Malakand, Operation was launched in South Waziristan the stronghold of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, between 14th October – 21 November 2009 with an aim to eliminate miscreants. Ten Cobras took part in this operation, with Dera

Ismail Khan as the base of operation. A total of 348 hours of flying in which 346 TOWs,1386 rockets and 159088 rounds of cannon were fired.

Colonel Asif Jah was the FOB commander and he highlights that in summer 2009, the preparation for the operation started. By this time , FOB had handed over the responsibility of arranging aviation fuel and ammunition to the 11 Corps and field formations. This greatly eased the administrative irritation apart from ensuring a fluent flow of logistics. ' I flew to DI Khan on a Mushak to carry out the reconnaissance of the intended base of operation . DI Khan was ideal in every sense as it has an airport which although several miles out of city still affords ample parking place for the aircraft and maintenance and also allows night casualty missions. The colonel staff of the infantry division (14 Infantry Division under command Major General Ijaz Choudhary) had reservations about the local protection but it was resolved'. Army Aviation fleet was gathered at the DI Khan, there were no less than 10 Cobras and equal number of Bell 412 and MI-17s. Pilots were accommodated in the nearby WAPDA building. It was a near perfect arrangements.

On 9th November 2009, during the conduct phase of operation Rah-E- Nijat, a formation of two Cobra helicopters and one Bell-412 helicopter was on a reconnaissance mission along Sararogha - Jandola axis with General Officer Commanding 14 Division on board. During reconnaissance, General Officer Commanding 14 Division indicated a target for engagement by attack helicopter during the engagement Cobra helicopter pilot by Lieutenant Colonel Asim Razzaq and Major Muddassar Razzaq received a bullet hit from miscreant. The bullet penetrated the helicopter form right ammunition door, ruptured the control rods and floor of pilot station, Injured left leg of Major Muddassar Razzaq and ejected from left canopy glass, shattering it into pieces. Inter communication of pilot and gunner was lost and the controllability of helicopter became very difficult. Lieutenant Colonel Asim headed for nearest safe landing place. The helicopter was safely landed at Sararogha helicopter to assess. The damage seeing the helicopter on ground, the miscreant tried to engagement it with rocket which exploded near the helicopter. The helicopter was not fit to fly but the crew rook a calculated risk and immediately took off and flew the helicopter to Manzai making a safe landing.

On 17 October 2009 Major Sohail Khan was assigned a very critical mission to support 10 NLI Regiment in capturing Wuzi Sar Top. Being the highest peak in Shakai valley. The top was heavily Guarded by the miscreant with anti aircraft weapons. The top had an elevation of 8500 feet and to engage it from the air, the pilot had to operate above 10,000 feet which was not possible without use of oxygen in the aircraft, Moreover it was very difficult to fire the weapons at this height with accuracy. Despite all odds, the officer delivered beyond expectations, during the complete duration of operation in South Waziristan Agency the officer flew for more than 100 hours and fired tows, rockets and cannon costing heavy losses to miscreants.

28 Army Aviation Squadron was raised with the fourteen newly inducted Puma helicopters received from UAE

GOC Maj Gen Arif

COAS Gen Kiyani

CGS Lt Gen Wayne (Gen Retd)

Army Aviators during Bajuar Operation 2008
From L-R: Maj Altaf, Lt Col Ghuman, Capt Imad,Capt Ali, Capt Asif

Army Aviators and Bell 412. (2006)

Tirah Valley-2010

An air operation by army aviation was conducted on 10 February 2010 in Tirah valley, Khyber Agency against a high value target. A formation of one Bell - 412 and two Cobra helicopters was engaging the target effectively. Major Mudassar Razzaq was flying a Cobra helicopter No 034. During this engagement, He maneuvered his helicopter in an extremely professional manner, unleashing his ammunition on the miscreant. He destroyed four fleeing vehicles and killed a number of miscreant. As the adjusted his helicopter aiming at a bunker, his helicopter was suspectedly hit by a rocket fired from a nearby ridge the rocket damaged the engine and tail boom of the helicopter it caught fire in mid air and became uncontrollable. He tried his best to control the helicopter but in vain. The helicopter fell to the ground and was engulfed inflames in matter of seconds. Major Mudassar Razzaq and his gunner Captain Asim Karim emmbraced shahadat on the spot. The circumstances in which Cobra was hit are by and large present in all operational engagements, however other helicopters either remained lucky or they caught the miscraents by surprise and hence were not lethally hit.

The 29 Army Aviation Squadron was raised on 2 August 2010 at Qasim Army Aviation Base, Rawalpindi. The 1st batch of 5 x MT series MI-17 helicopters were commissioned in Squadron on 19 September 2010. After the 1st opeartional mission to Ghalanai on 19 February 2011, the Squadron was declared opeartional on 23 February 2011 and the call sign, Hammer Head was officially approved

Mohmand Agency, Operation Brekhna 2010/2011

Right from the commencement of Operation Brekhna in December 2010 at Mohammad Agency, Major Fahad Mustafa actively participated in all stages of operation and flew around thirty combat sorties. During Operation Brekhna-I, he displayed an impressive performance by successfully neutralizing the stronghold key positions of the miscreants in Dawezal Sector. During the aerial logistic support operation to sustain the isolated Ziarat Post on the border, which was surrounded by the miscreants with heavy / anti air craft weapons; he played the pivotal role from 3-28 February 2011. He did not only ensure the safe provision of logistic sorties by MI-17 helicopter due to his agile and effective combat cover, but also neutralized numerous 14.5 /12.7 millimeter anti aircraft machine guns and mortar positions of the miscreants.

During operation Brekhna-II on 7 April 2011, Major Fahad Mustafa destroyed an ammunition dump of the miscreants at Point 1290. During missions flown from 15-27 April 2011, he also destroyed three 12.7 millimeter gun positions north of Zarisar Mountain and inflicted numerous causalities to the miscreants through his agile attacks. His effective support ultimately resulted in the successfull linkup between troops at Zarisar Mountain and the A-3 post. During the first battle for Walidad ridge, his helicopter came intense fire of 12.7 millimeter machine guns. Maj Fahad not only saved his helicopter skillfully but also remained calm and persistent in providing effective cover to the advancing ground troops. Throughout the operations and at various occasions he showed extraordinary bravery and mission orientation. His role remained instrumental in provision of highly effective combat support to the ground troops.

On 18 and 19 June 2011, Major Sana Ullah Khan (Flight Commander and Pilot in Command) and Major Rashid Jaffar (Gunner and Co-pilot) were assigned the mission to destroy hostile targets and provide aerial combat support to the ground troops during capture of Walidad ridge in Operation Brekhna - II. At one stage, the ground troops suffered heavy casualties and their advance was stalled due to intense fire from the miscreants, positioned at the well sited and prepared heights. They were heavily armed with not only automatic weapons but numerous anti air craft machine guns. The pilot identified the hostile locations and successfully engaged 12.7 millimeter anti air craft gun site, which was firing extensively on helicopters. Meanwhile, the two rockets were fired by the miscreants, which exploded right in front of the helicopter and the bang jolted the complete helicopter. However, Major Sana remained very cool and controlled the helicopter skillfully. He quickly ascertained the performance of helicopter for possibility of damage and very professionally decided to continue providing the aerial combat cover to the ground troops under distress. Showing great courage, he spotted and engaged multiple hostile locations, while endangering his life against effective anti aircraft fire by the miscreants. Absolutely involved in the battle and displaying extraordinary bravery during final stage of the attack in the evering, he descended to very low level and encouraged ground troops to climb up the objective. This action of pilots contributed a great deal in raising the morale of ground troops. The display of high degree of courage and boldness of the pilot, infused extraordinary spirit amongst the climbing troops. Pilots kept providing the aerial combat cover until own troops were stable on the objective area and later MI-17 helicopter replenished the

area captured by the troops. Major Sana flew very bravely for 12 hours on that particular day and provided very agile and effective air cover to the ground troops under critical and dangerous situation. During the battle, his helicopter was also hit by two 12.7 millimeter anti air craft gun bullets.

Dir have an average elevation of 2000-3700 meters, the major tribes are Gujjar, Wardak, Swati, Roghani, Katani, Mashmani and Shinwari. The major Talib leader was Latif alias Yasir of Village Chiragh Ali. Mutabbar Khan was another chieftain having a lashkar of over 1000 under his control.

On 30th July and 1st August 2011 the Wing carried out two search and cordon operations in the area, in the first operation 45 scouts of No 1 Wing in collaboration with 33 Baluch Regiment conducted the operation in Village Loi Kandao between 1000-1500 hours in which not much was confiscated, major weapons that were seized included two heavy machine guns and two small machine guns. In the second operation the booty was much bigger, it was conducted in the Village Ayagai Gharbi between 1630-2310 hours, 30 scouts of No 1 Wing along with 33 Baluch Regiment and local police including female personals carried out this task. The general pattern was that scouts cordoned off the area at a distance of 300 meters and regular army at 200 meters there by allowing local police and political administration to individually search each house. Five SMGs, one HMG and one Recoilless Rifle along with Thuraya communication set were confiscated.

From August onwards the deployment of the wing was spread, the headquarters were established at Chauktian having a strength of 145 Scouts, 14 scouts at Tariq Observation Post, 31 scouts at Siar Amin Post and another 110 scouts at Nawa Killi pass base and at Zakhana Killi and finally 137 scouts were placed at Shingara, Attan and Shahi. 16 Azad Kashmir Regiment was also incorporated into the operations and few posts were jointly managed and rest were responsibility of either scouts or the regular army. The scouts were not at the top rather they were at the bases of passes checking the influx of people. No.1 Wing from August onwards came under command of 105 Brigade which was part of 19 Infantry Division commanded by Major General Ramday, in an interview General Ramday highlighted his plans which revolved around closing the passes and not allowing the miscreants inside the valley either to escape or to get reinforcement from Afghanistan thus control of passes was vital. Later the General received a bullet in his thigh while carrying out aerial reconnaissance in the area. Chauktian the base is ahead of Timergarh where the headquarters of Dir Scouts is placed, a road leads towards the Chauktian and from there various tracks leads to passes which starting from north are Dobando Dara where an independent post of No.1 Wing was established, on the left of this pass is Anwaar Darra then further left is Shingar, then Bin Darra and Nusrat Darra.

Raid on Osama Bin Laden- May 2012

Much has been written about the Osama bin Laden and the USA raid on his residence at Abbottabad. Colonel Khalil Dar was performing the duties as Colonel GS. Past midnight and

he got a call from COS of Army Aviation Command Brigadier Tipu Karim, inquiring about the state of own aircraft and whether any of own helicopter is carrying out night flying. ' I was perplexed despite my repeated assertion that all our aircraft are accounted for, yet Brigadier Tipu insisted that I should get the report from all base commanders, I did that. Meanwhile Brigadier Tipu again called and informed me that one helicopter has carshed at Abbottabad and he is sending an EME officer to the site. I , suggested that in order to save time I can travel by road just because I am living close to Aviation Command. I reached Abbottabad by 0400 hours, site of crash was quite visible due to presence of army and quite a number of civilians. Commandant PMA was present and he asked me ' do you know what type of helicopter is this'. I had a look at the small helicopter and my first reaction was that of a relief , as it was not an helicopter on our inventory , however this further increased my inquisitiveness as what type of helicopter is this and why it is here?. I explained much to the annoyance of the commandant that I am unable to recognise it and maybe after going through the internet at the PMA, I can identify it.

The fact was that in my opinion, it had not crashed rather it was destroyed intentionally, main body was intact only the cockpit was destroyed, I pointed to the commandant that even rotor blades are without any damage and still clear of the adjoining wall. I also entered the house, there were only three may be two bullet markings on the wall. A look around the adjoining area revealed that a helicopter most likely Chinook had landed, I observed the markings of wheel on the ground and measured them. I later drove back to Rawalpindi, where I received the message to report to the GHQ and to brief the senior officers regarding my findings; which I did. By this time it had been revealed by the American president Obama regarding the raid and killing of Osama bin Laden. During my briefing, I was inquired as what can be the most likely route of American intruders, my professional hypothesis basing upon my flying in and around Peshawar was that , Americans had used the pass in Bajaur as it has the lowest altitude to enter our airspace and most probably they refuelled near Swat. Soon an inquiry commission was formed under a retired judge who was also very reluctant to accept my hypothesis, thus we flew in a MI-17 to the pass in Bajaur and on return I indicated to him the likely place of refuelling, however by this time due to flooding the entire area was under water. Later it was disclosed by the Americans that the helicopter which supposedly had crashed was a rather very secretive type and only few were built thus no information was available on web or on any other databank.

Summer of 2012 – Miranshah

Military could have finished off these miscreants nuisance within days but it was the care for collateral damage which binds the hands of military fire power. Every shell was fired with lot of calculation and after repeatedly cross checking the damage assessment. Military for long has been restraining itself from excessive use of force but with this pattern it was appreciated that unless stern action is not taken immediately the miscreants will keep the notion of victory with them. On 6th July 2011 a joint operation involving army and Tochi Scouts was undertaken in which the known locations of miscreants close to own posts were targeted heavily with

From L to R: Maj Mohsin, Brig Khalil, Col Nasir, Maj Hamid, Capt Wajid at Miranshah 2011

Cobra crew at Miranshah 2011

From L to R: Maj Mohsin, Lt Col Adeel,Maj Irfan, Maj Kamran,Maj Saqib in Ops area

artillery. Zakeem Hospital located on the south western edge of MiranShah close to Sargardan was demolished, their locations inside the MiranShah Bazaar were hit with attack helicopters.

MiranShah Garrison was another important target for the miscreants. On two occasions in November 2011 they physically attacked the fort but both times were repulsed with heavy fire. On 7th November 2011 the first attack came followed by another on 14th. Miscreants were making use of Shawal Medical Complex and Shaheen Hotel. 7 Division employed all fire power including tanks, attack helicopters, artillery and automatic weapons to engrave the fire power superiority of the military on miscreants. Five anti-state elements were killed, Shaheen Hotel and Shawal Medical Complex were hit hard.

On 7 November 2011, Captain Muhammad Awais Ali (Co-Pilot and Gunner of Cobra helicopter) alongwith Pakistan Army 41206 Captain Muhammad Rehan Ali (Pilot in Command of Cobra helicopter) was tasked to provide aerial combat cover to the ground troops during the extrication phase from the demoltion site of the miscreants hide out at Shawal Hotel (Miranshah city). After successful demolition of the miscreants hide out, ground troops were extricating from the site when significant activity of miscreants attacking the troops was observed by Pilot. Pilts informed the Ground Commander and sought clearance for engagement of the miscreants. Very swiftly and aggressively, Pilots attacked the miscreants, who in turn opened up heavy fire on the Cobra helicopter. To prevent collateral damage despite eminent danger, Pilot had to fly very low to engage the miscreants effectively. While exiting the target area after second engagement, the helicopter came under heavy miscreants fire. Bullet fired by miscreants penetrated through the Head Up Display (HUD) and passed through the other side of the Cobra helicopter, which was just a few inches from the pilots. Despite such a close call to their life, pilots remained cool and kept engaging the miscreant positions persistently and effectively. The daring, prompt and sustained action of the pilots inflicted number of casualities upon the miscreants and own troops were able to extricate successfully without any casualty. The role of Captain Muhammad Awais as Gunner and Co-pilot of Cobra helicopter was instrumental in safety of own troops after successful operation.

There was an uneasy peace going on in the agency which broke down on 6th May 2012, a Baloch regiment was carrying out demolition of a wall near Amin post which unexpectedly turned into a close battle with miscreants. Cobras were called for close support, fact remains that the mere presence of the Cobra at Miranshah was the biggest morale booster for the formation and the troops. Cobra when they fly low over the posts were always cheered by the scouts and soldiers. Colonel Wajahat Ghumman came and so was the Qasim Base Commander Brigadier Khalil Dar.

Pilots were accommodated within the fort, a two room set was given, at any given time there were no less than a dosen pilots present. Cobra pilots were from the three combat squadrons, same holds true for Bell. Puma and MI-17; Mushak pilots from the corps squadron were also present. The missions were passed by the FBO who in turn would receive the requests from the field formations. At times due to emergent and quick response the actions were undertaken first and latter the formalities were fulfilled. Crew was also stationed and provided accommodation

within the fort close to the tarmac. Words cannot do enough justice to the dedication of these crew chiefs, they were always the first one to be on the aircraft , carrying out daily inspections often exposed to militants short range weapons. Daily the flight commander would attend the daily briefing of the infantry division and then carrying out own preparation and mission planning. Aviation fuel was being transported from Bannu either on own fuel bowsers or through contract carrier.

Life pattern at Miranshah was exciting and unpredictable , at the mid of night a blast and rocket would blast inside the fort and then retaliation fire from own artillery; at times this duel would last for hours. Initially for a new pilot it seems rather a novelty to walk and carry out his daily chores amidst this gun fire but very shortly one gets tuned to this new way of life. Sports in the evening, long walks on the runway, tennis and table tennis apart from the Tochi Scouts gymnasium in the mess were the only or major forms of relaxation and all this took place with occasional fire from either side. On Sunday, there used to be a curfew imposed in the area and movement of military convoys would take place and Cobras would provide aerial cover or be ready to support any contingency. MI-17 and Pumas alongwith Bell 412 were also either flying or in stand by mode.. Pilots and crew were rotated fortnightly. Words of gratitude to the Tochi Scout and their commandants for their whole hearted support to the army aviation..

Notion of victory was with military, no serious incident had taken place since summer of 2009 when a Baloch Regiment convoy near Gharlamai was ambushed resulting in the shahadat of 16 soldiers. Since then army have been responding heavily on even minor violations, a kind of see-saw battle was going on between the military and miscreants with army emerging as a winner.

There were four infantry brigades and four wings of Tochi Scouts present in the Tochi Valley when the summer of 2012 started. Major General Ali Abbas took over the command of the division from Major General Ghayur Akhtar in October 2011, he thus became the sixth general officer commanding in seven years (2005-2012), Tochi Scouts command was handed over by Colonel Amir Akbar to Colonel Wajahat Hamdani in July 2011, Wajahat is also the sixth commandant since Tochi Scouts came under operational control of army. Divisional artillery was commanded by Brigadier Shahid, 103 Brigade by Brigadier Akhtar, there was segment of Frontier Works Organization busy in constructing road linking Ghulam Khan with Bannu. Army Aviation had its contingent comprising of two Cobras, one Bell 412 and one either Puma or Mi-17 helicopter. Pilots were residing in an annexe adjoining Tochi Mess; they were here for an attachment of fifteen days from 31, 33 and 35 Combat Squadrons apart from 25 or 27 Utility Squadrons. Aviation procedures which will play a critical role in coming days needs bit of elaboration. A Forward Operating Base(FOB) was established at Peshawar since 2009 and in 2012 it was being commanded by Colonel Sardar Sajjad. All aviation missions had to be routed through FOB.

Eid Day 27th October 2012. Cobra pilot, writes in his diary 'It is Eid day and it is sunny and warm, Local had the Eid yesterday which is another strange paradox of our cultural clash…Thus

Eid was in Saudi Arabia on 25th, locals had it on 26th and state is having it on 27th.. Yesterday I went to the tennis court and Israr(tennis marker) who is a local Daur surprisingly came to the tennis court, wearing new clothes, he was celebrating Eid, since there was none in the court except the ball pickers thus I had a good chat with him. I inquired about him and other locals celebrating Eid. Israr told me that he and his two other brothers purchased sacrificial animals for 60,000 Rupees which includes one lamb and one cow. The Eid is simple in the city and in the tribal villages, they sacrificed but all cannot do it because of financial limitations, but they in fact reared the sacrificial animal for a year. The main and central Eid prayers are held in the city; since it was Friday yesterday thus I also heard the sermon in Pashtu. There were few shops opened in the city as per Israr, people carry out sacrifice and then distribute the meat and also keep the rest with them, in winter it is possible but in summer it is difficult due to heat and lack of electricity. On my query of women wearing new clothes and how and from where they buy bangles, Israr replied that among Daur the women do go for shopping either in Miranshah or to Bannu but in majority of cases it is the men who buy these items for their wives or daughters'.

War develops new games and fun for the children of the area, it is true here. Children's favourite plaything in NWA seems to be teasing the military. They normally put an empty bottle in a shopping bag, attach a cord with it, put all of these under rubble, then simply sit and enjoy the bomb disposal drills of military over their pranks. By and large they are friendly, waves their hands when they see a convoy, rush to the walls of their villages and then simply laugh. At times one notices the grown up children rushing inside to pick their toddlers; to ensure that they should not miss the fun part. There is a lunatic living in MiranShah and surprisingly he has survived all these war years , rocket attacks and IEDs, even today he is the only person who is seen walking around amidst intense firing going on from both sides in all directions.

From the preceding events a different kind of life pattern emerges about MiranShah and words cannot do justice to the pulsating, exciting, thrilling, fulfilling and above all relaxing environments of this wonderful fort and garrison. No doubt it is the most dangerous place on this earth right now. Nothing can be taken as granted here, one moment it is all peace and very next moment a loud bang of a rocket landing close by. Here the morning wakeup call on majority of days is a loud burst of machine gun. Most of the nights it is the artillery fire which is soothing to the ears. After a week any new comer very conveniently and confidently can differentiate between the firing sounds of a G-3, Kalashnikov, Mortar, medium and field artillery pieces. Scouts walk here with their chest high; there is something in their walk and their conduct, their whole body radiating an aura of self confidence. These are the men who daily face danger, who stand all night guarding the fort, who on any given day move out of fort knowing fully well that roads and tracks are full of IEDs, they take every day as a last day, this is what this seven years of war has instilled in them.

For young army officers it is a dream come true, it simply brings the best out of them which probably even they were not fully aware of themselves in peace stations. RODs, piqueting and staying at posts is the kind of experience which many a generations have passed away without ever hearing so much of fire power; except on firing range which this generation is experiencing

every day. This life is different from Siachen Glacier where nature was the biggest enemy, here man is the worst predator and one wrong move on part of any officer in Frontier Warfare can make or break a life time reputation.

Scouts in the summer evenings prefer long walk going around different posts, enjoying the fresh air, greenery and beautiful countryside. The orchards full of ripe plum, apricot and pomegranate. Despite the instructions not to pluck them still like young naughty boys, these scouts indulge in this irresistible play. Posts always present a calm posture no matter how serious or grave the situation is but still faces of scouts radiate confidence. To a scout most precious thing seems to be his pet, usually a Chikor, he looks after him like his own child, covering him during the hot part of day with shade, washing him, feeding him and feels good talking about him. Just like traditional British society the best way to start conversation with a scout is by asking about his pet.

Winter of-2012

By winter 2012 the situation was under control of military, 6th May incident was thoroughly analysed and deductions were reached and acted upon. Major General Ali Abbas highlights the fact *'*to eliminate these miscreants through use of force is not a difficult task especially with the available manpower and firepower but the dilemma is how to avoid collateral damage which is bound to happen in this scenario. Thus army and for that matter military's aim is to compel the locals to evict foreign fighting elements present among them'. Ali further highlights that one of the key step he took was to make the division identify target during hours of darkness, aim was to avoid collateral damage.

Major Fahad Mustafa joined Army Aviation in August 2005. The officer has been rendering his duties as a combat pilot in the 11 Corps area of operation since January 2006. He first operated in Mohmand Agency in August 2008 for logistic cover missions for Goraparai and Shunkrai posts. The officer is performing as a Captain on Cobra Helicopter and has flown over 1250 hours in the operational area while participating in the various operations conducted on the western borders.

Right from the commencement of Operation Brekhna in December 2010 at Mohammad Agency, Major Fahad Mustafa actively participated in all stages of operation and flew around thirty combat sorties. During Operation Brekhna-I, he displayed an impressive performance by successfully neutralizing the stronghold key positions of the miscreants in Dawezal Sector. During the aerial logistic support operation to sustain the isolated Ziarat Post on the border, which was surrounded by the miscreants with heavy / anti air craft weapons; he played the pivotal role from 3-28 February 2011. He did not only ensure the safe provision of logistic sorties by MI-17 helicopter due to his agile and effective combat cover, but also neutralized numerous 14.5 /12.7 millimeter anti aircraft machine guns and mortar positions of the miscreants.

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April 2011, he also destroyed three 12.7 millimeter gun positions north of Zarisar Mountain and inflicted numerous causalities to the miscreants through his agile attacks. His effective support ultimately resulted in the successfull linkup between troops at Zarisar Mountain and the A-3 post. During the first battle for Walidad ridge, his helicopter came intense fire of 12.7 millimeter machine guns. Maj Fahad not only saved his helicopter skillfully but also remained calm and persistent in providing effective cover to the advancing ground troops. Throughout the operations and at various occasions he showed extraordinary bravery and mission orientation. His role remained instrumental in provision of highly effective combat support to the ground troops.

Kurram Valley- 2011-2013

Kurram valley is an old civilisation, mentioned in Rig Veda as Kurrmu, it is known after the principal river of the same name which runs for almost 70 miles bisecting the valley in a north-south direction before.. Kurram Valley is the area between the Thall in the south to the semi-circular mountain range of Safeed Koh in the north, in which Sikaram is the highest peak (15620 feet). It ascends or descends in a gradual manner with Parachinar the headquarters of the agency in far north having an elevation of 5750 feet and Thall at 2150 feet. In December 2009, the sectarian conflict had resulted in the closure of the main artery of the valley from Kohat onwards, miscreants now started to settle down in the central Kurram, after military operations in swat and other parts of the province.

"**Operation Azmarai Gharoo**" (The Lion Roar) was launched by Frontier Corps Khyber Pakhtonkhawa as sequal to Operation Koh-e-Paima to flush militants stronghold in the portions of Central Kurram and Orakzai agency. Operation commenced on night 14-15 November 2011. Due to attitude and confined valleys surrounded by the dominating heights, Combat engagement by Cobra helicopters was highly demanding and dangerous from both technical and tactical point of view. On 16 Novemebr 2011, Special Operation Group elements were operating under Major Sikandar at Murgham Kandao when a sniper bullet hit the officer and he embraced Shahadat. Major Ali Raj (Pilot in Command of Cobra helicopter) alongwith Pakistan Army 40804 Captain Furqan Khalil was tasked to provide cover to the rescue party to extricate the body of Shaheed. Major Ali Raj immediately reacted to the the situation and reached overhead the area. At that moment, the ground rescue party was ambushed and stuck up under intense hostile fire. Resultantly, an officer and a Non Commissioned Officer were injured and the rescue party was pinned down. Showing extraordinary vigilance, Pilot quickly ascertained the hostile locations and attacked furiously. He flew to very low level and entered into the pass to engage the miscreant locations precisely and simultaneously provided cover to the rescue party to extricate the shaheed body. The daring attacks by the pilot in the face of intense hostile fire and aggressive aerial cover, enabled the rescue party to successfully evacuate the body of shaheed and get extricated without further loss. During the process, his helicopter was hit by two bullets, however, he continued attacking miscreants locations and provided cover to troops till the time they reached the safe location.

On 17 November 2011, same pilots were given the mission to engage heavy resistance faced by the miscreants to the Light Commando Battalion troops in the confined valley with adjoining heights of 8800 feet. While Operating beyond technical limitations of the helicopter, Pilots devised an extraordinary tactics and attacked the hostile locations very effectively, which saved the lives of own troops and paved the way for move forward by ground troops

On 18 November 2011, troops of Frontier Corps confiscated two explosive laden vehicles near Spinwam (west of Thall). These vehicles were being escorted to Mir Ali by the Frontier Corps troops and pilots were once again tasked to provide safe passage to the convoy till Mir Ali Cantonment. About 20 kilometers short of the destination, the escort came under ambush by the miscreants. Pilots observed the rocket being fired on the escort, however, the location of firer could not be ascertained. Risking their life, pilots descended to low level to spot the firer. As soon the helicopter got low, the miscreant fired another rocket to destroy the helicopter. Displaying extraordinary vigilance and pilot ability, they attacked and decapacitated the miscreant firer and ensured his apprehension by own troops. After this, pilots quickly turned to scan the other side of the road and spotted two miscreants firing on own troops. With remarkable agility, they killed the miscreants and saved the lives of own troops. With highly daring and aggressive combat cover, pilots ensured safe passage of the explosive laden vehicles to Mir Ali cantonment without further loss.

Operation Koh-e-Saffaid was conducted by the Frontier Corps Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to clear the miscreants infected areas of Central Kurram agency with an aim to open the road route for civil population from Thall to Parachinar. The operation hinged upon the successful helicopter landings of Eighty troops of the Northern Light Infantry, Light Commando Battalion with the logistic sustenance for 72 hours. Heliborne landing was planned to be executed on the mountain top (later named as Lalak Jan Ridge), which was located in the midst of the miscreants infected area at the altitude of 8700 feet above sea level. Captain Jauhar Ayub (Pilot in command) alongwith Major Rashid Jaffar, was tasked to precede the heliborne landings to sanities / clear the Landing Zone (LZ) and provide combat cover to the landing phase. Heliborne operation at such altitude and that too under unknown threat environment was a highly risky and demanding task. On the execution day, four MI-17 helicopters were planned to execute the heliborne landings in three wicks (comprising two helicopters each). Owing to the ambiguous threat environment and tricky terrain; the timings, technique and swiftness of operation was the fundamental requirement of the particular operation. The Combat team, which preceded the landing phase to clear / sanities the landing zone, observed hostile fire from east of the LZ and three individuals were seen climbing up the top. Simultaneously, four individuals were observed loitering right in the mid of L Z.

Threat from east was successfully neutralized by an aggressive and effective attack by the Cobra helicopter, however, movement of individuals on the LZ created suspicion and posed grave danger to the landing phase. On the pretext that those individuals might be some innocent shepherds, the Air Battle Captain decided not to fire upon them. Captain Jauhar Ayub was tasked to observe the suspicious movement on the LZ and act in case of any hostile action. Due

to strong tail wind (which could not be determined at such altitude and due to non availability of wind sock), the first MI-17 helicopter could not stop on the designated landing spot. Captain Jauhar dived promptly and covered the tail of the MI-17 helicopter and ensured its safe landing on the LZ. As the landing phase was in progress, Pilot experienced illumination of fuel booster pump failure light in the helicopter, warranting immediate landing at the closest landing space. The criticality of the helicopter landing phase could not afford non coverage by the Cobra helicopter at that moment. Showing great courage, pilot remained calm and kept providing the combat cover to the heliborne force despite the malfunction in his helicopter. The close cover by Captain Jauhar despite facing technical emergency gave great confidence to the landing force and led to the safe execution of the operation. The successful and safe heliborne landing with complete surprise created a great imbalance for the miscreants and paved the way forward for successful execution of Operation Koh-e-Paima with minimum loss of lives. The role of Captain Jauhar Ayub was instrumental in the execution of safe and successful heliborne operation.

Koh-i-Safeed-III was launched on 3rd March 2013 in the Arghajo pocket. Militants had strong bunkers on Tambusar feature. One major attack was launched by them on 20th April 2012 at Green Ridge. Cobras engaged militant suspected hideouts from 1415 -1445 hours, firing four TOWs and resultantly three bunkers were destroyed. Another formation of Cobras supported by the troops of Commando and FF at 1500 hours. At Jarobi, on 5th April 2013, pair of Air Wolves along with Bell 412 participated. Total flying time of Cobras was 12.8 hours, in which three rockets and 840 cannon rounds were fired. Both Cobras and Bell 412 got hit by 12.7mm bullets fired by militants. Major Shamayl Raja was awarded with a COAS commendation card for his dedication and professionalism. On 6th and 7th April 2013, Air Wolves again supported ground troops at Kalaya.

During Kalaya engagements, three Cobras and one Bell 412 took part. Total flying generated by Combat team was 21.9 hours. During this operation ten rockets and 2600 rounds of cannon were fired. Koh-i-Safed IV was thus aimed at retaking of the Muhammadi feature, it started rolling at mid night on 30th May 2013, with heavy artillery bombardment. The advancing infantry and commando battalion had to face accurate sniper fire from the militants. Seven Cobras along with three Bell 412 formed into three combat teams led Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf . Cobra teams attacked one after the other at the suspected hideouts of the militants, guided by ground troops. It was almost a replica of Peochar operation, only this time the resistance was stiff. One team remained in air whereas the other would refuel at Thall. Due to high altitude, the fuel was kept bare minimum in order to have more firepower. The situation was as such that there was no clear cut delimitation among the friend and foe.

Ziarat Sar/ Qismat Sangar engagements were one of the major and main engagements in Koh-e-Sufaid III. Five Cobras and two Bell 412 participated in this operation, generating 35.9 hours of flying. In this operation fifteen rockets and 2350 rounds of cannon were fired. This op facilitated the ground troops to capture both the heights with relatively less effort. Operation was started on 5 May and was completed on 7 May 2013.

For Muhammadi Top, seven Cobras along with three Bell 412 were configured into three teams; it was the elevation which was a serious limitation for the Cobras; no Cobra has ever fired at such height. Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf himself led the Air Wolves. Attack commenced at 0200 hours on 30th May 2013. Own troops did not face any stiff resistance at the base but as they climbed up, the occasional accurate sniping from militant would halt the progress, presence of improvised explosive device (IED) was another constant fear and threat.. However constant air cover allow own troops to inch forward On 8th June 2013 Air Wolves had an engagement at Maidan in Tirah. Militants were on the run and now found sanctuary in Tirah plateau. There is a pass at Kalaya which allows this movement, it is an ancient route. In this operation five Cobras along with two Bell 412 took part. Fifteen rockets and 2100 rounds of cannon were fired. These engagements generated a total of 16.3 hours of AH-1Fs.

On 17 April 2013, Duduni-2 Post suffered a VBIED suicide attack which resulted in 22 causalities of 26 AK. As a result of this an engagement of miscreant commanders, foreign fighters den and ammunition dump in Miran Shah and Idak village were planed. These localities were very closely guarded with anti aircraft weapons within populated areas of the towns. The consideration of collateral in case of stand off of attack helicopters due to dispersion of cannon and rocket fire placed immense pressure to make a high precise engagement. Keeping In view all the consideration and requirements of swift response he decided to undertake the mission and engage these populated localities from very low altitude. He showed immense courage as flight commander and led the formation from the front into this unusual engagement. He very precisely engaged first target comprising of a miscreants compound in Miran Shah Bazar with 600 x Cannon round. He made 4 x high speed passes over the Mian Shah city and during every pass all available weapons of the area were firing on the helicopter. In this engagement 3 x miscreants got killed and 8 got injured (ex TTP).

On 18 April at 0630 hours, information was received that miscreants are gathered in an old disused mosque with likely an ammunition dump underneath. Against the engagement was planned meticulously and was executed highly professionally which resulted in the destruction of the complex and ammunition dump alongwith the death of 40-45 x Uzbek fighters.

On same day at about 0830 hours, he under took another target in general area Hakim Khel which was heavily infested with foreign miscreants. Inspite of small and heavy arms fire from all possible directions, the officer was not only able to keep the helicopter safe but also engaged the target successfully with 500 x cannon and 1 x Tow resulting into 17 x Uzbek fighters killed.

NVG Casuality Evacuation from Jandola

On 14 December 2013, Major Taimur Qasim and Captain Salman Shaheen of 27 Squadron were performing the duties as NVG crew at FOB Peshawar. At approximately 1900 hours, they received a mission to evacuate a casuality from Jandola. The casuality was an eleven year old girl, daughter of a shop keeper at Jandola who received severe head injuries in an accident by a military vehicle while crossing a road.The formation of 1xMi-17 (medevac) and 1x Bell-412

took off at 2015 hours for Jandola. After 3 hours the formation landed back safety at Peshawar. The pilots and crew of Army Aviation are ready to put their lives in danger to save innocent lives of local people of the tribal belt. The girl was treated in military hospital and is now happily married to a soldier having two children.

North Waziristan. Zarb-e-Azb; 2014

In the spring of 2014, the chances of arriving at peace in the tribal areas took a last breath when the Taliban martyred 23 Frontier Corps soldiers, held in captivity since 2010. The last straw came when Jinnah Airport at Karachi was attacked by Taliban on 8th June 2014, in which no less 28 civilians were killed. Thus on 15th June an operation was launched in North Waziristan Agency, Operation Zarb-E-Azb to clear the agency from miscreants. 7, 9, and 40 Infantry Divisions supported by brigade of Special Service Group (SSG) took part in this operation, an overall strength of 30,000 troops. There were 22 infantry battalions, eight wings of Frontier Corps and two battalions of SSG.

Army Aviation committed a squadron of Cobras and a squadron each of Mi-17 and Bell 412. The Forward Operating base (FOB) organised itself into three teams known as Alpha, Bravo and Charlie. Team Alpha was based at Peshawar with two Cobras, one Bell 412 and Mi-17. Team bravo was based at Wanna with four Cobras, two Bell 412 and one Puma. Heaviest was the team Charlie at Kohat, having six Cobras, four Bell 412 and three Mi-17. The three aviation teams had different role as each was in support of an infantry formation but overall it was combat support, casualty evacuation, command and liaison and each team was given a be prepared mission to support other teams as and when required. Casualty evacuation in the tribal areas was the most sensitive task and role required from army aviation. The utter brutality of Taliban with the captives had generated an apprehension that anyone who is caught alive by Taliban will be beheaded. The operation itself was in seven phases.

In first phase, clearance of MiranShah bazar and surrounding habitat, in second phase, clearance of Drappa Danda Khel followed by clearance of road Boya-Degan (west of Miranshah). In Phase four the focus shifted to south where Jhallar –Bichi axis was to be cleared. In Phase five, area north of Miranshah (Saidgi- Ghulam Khan) and in phase six the adjoining area of Spinwam was to be sanitised. In the last phase clearance of Gariom-Bicchi Axis in the south west was to be cleared. Collectively all the phases were within a fifteen minutes flying radius from Miranshah.

A week after the announcement of the operation was spend in evacuating the local population from the town. These Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) were provided with temporary accommodation at Bannu. Army Aviators remained committed and busy in the process. FAARP were moved forward. On 15th June 2014, at first light the flight of Cobras appeared overhead Miranshah and started patrolling the town. The town self gives the appearance of a ghost city. Militants had left the town and as such no retaliatory fire took place, on the other hand the ground clearing troops including Commando battalion was not sure about the safety

of the streets and house thus each house had to be cleared. They would call the Cobras for suppressing fire. On 30th June 2014, the clearing operation of the town commenced,[6]by 30th June, fifteen terrorists were killed inside the and surrounding areas of Miranshah. Overall 376 terrorists were killed, 19 had surrendered and 61 hideouts of militants had been destroyed. Own seventeen soldiers embraced martyrdom.

4 Commando Battalion undercommand Lieutenant Colonel Adnan Bashir , was given the mission of clearing the city, 5 Commando battalion was tasked to clear the adjoining areas of Tapi Tol Khel and Dande Darpa. Over 400 compounds were searched and cleared by 11 SSB, major explosive factories were detected and destroyed. Most important was the moral ascendency which own troops gained over the miscreants. For long , since 2005, Miranshah had been a no go area for own forces and own troops were practically besieged within the mud walls of the Tochi Scouts fort. No vehicle could proceed to Bannu other than on Sunday, none could even move freely within the perimeter of the fort , however this operation took the initiative away from miscreants.

4 Commando Battalion, in the first phase employed their snipers with great effects, these snipers would take down anything moving in the streets of the ghost town. Captain Abrar who carried out the physical search of the town, later highlighted the fact that the layout of washrooms and toilets are different in each political agency. The search and clearance of the town was a nerve wrecking experience, a town famous for manufacturing of IEDs had to be neutralised and it was carried out without any major loss. 5 Commando Battalion on the other hand, secured the adjoining heights , these heights in the past have been the sites from where rocket attacks were launched.

Multan, 25th June 2014.

Aviation by nature is full of danger, despite all precautions and remedial measures accidents still do occur; mainly to trained the flight crew. On 25th June , routine night flying was planned at Multan by the Cobra Squadron, there was a bit of urgency as the squadron had to be deployed in coming days for operations against the miscraents thus night flying was vital. Major Yasir with his gunner Captain Murtaza Saeed. Both pilots carried out their circuit and landings drill, while on their final run, the airfield encountered a massive and severe dust storm something very similar to what had occurred on 22nd June 1998 in which one Puma met a fatal crash. Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf was the commanding officer and on receipt of the weather warning he immediately terminated the night flying. ill fated Cobra made the landing in the dust storm and hovered to the taxi way. a confusion erupted in which the captain of the Cobra made a fatal decision, instead of putting down the helicopter and waiting for the duststorm to die down , he hovered towards the tarmac, during which the newly duged surface earth acted as catalyst and further reduced the visibility; end result being the death of two pilots.

6 Press Release PR 150/2014 of Inter Services Public Relations dated 30th June 2014.

Boya –Degan (July 2014)

After clearing the Miranshah, the SSG troops advanced towards the west, next objective was the securing of road Miranshah- Panekzai-Humzoni-Ahmad Khel-Boya.-Degan uptill Khar Kamar Two commando battalions, 5 and 7 were given the mission to clear the area, these areas , especially area ahead of Boya was the stronghold of Gul Bahadur a militant commander, also the Wazir tribe territory starts truly ahead of Boya. 7 commando cleared Ahmed Khel where as 5 Commando Battalion cleared Ghazlami. 7 infantry Division was the overall formation in charge of NWA, it had apart from 27 and 88 Infantry Brigades, the 11 SSB also under its command, thus at times commando battalions were placed undercommand infantry brigades but majority of the operation they were undercommand 11 SSB.

7 Commando Battalion during the operation was ambushed at Ali Khel but it managed to get out of the block, in the action, two commandos Lance Naik Tariq and Sepoy Siddique embraced shahadat. Finally on 8th July Usman and Haider Companies were able to link up with a NLI regiment at Boya .

In the next phase, two commando battalions {5&7} cleared the road from Boya to Degan. The area as such was divided into six sectors and clearance operation was carried out meticulously , villages like Sani Khel, Land, Mohammed Khel, Fazal din Kot and finally the Degan itself was cleared. In Degan, over 160 compounds were searched by Khalid, Harris and Mujtaba Companies. There were no own casualties in this operation.

5 Commando later move further westward, sanitizing Khar Kamar, Ghazlamai and Kani Rogha, mission was accomplished by 16th July and area was handed over to 46 Frontier force Regiment.

Retrieval of 30 Sind regiment Shuhada

A section strength of 30 Sind Regiment had suffered casualties in a firefight with militants in Ahmed Khel on 15th July 2014. Commanding officer of the Sind Battalion made the request for SSG reinforcement for retrieval of his dead bodies. A company of 4 Commando and two companies of 7 Commando battalions took part in the operation, four Cobra gunship helicopters and two Bell 412 also took part in the operation. The dead bodies of Shuhada were lying in the bed of Tochi River. In the initial phase of this operation, Havildar Muhammad Mustafa embraced shahadat while Naik Shahadat got injured. Operation after a brief pause was again initiated after last light. Commandos of 4 Yalgaar volunteered and retrieved the dead bodies from the mid stream. ‘ my men were deployed facing the river, and providing cover to the retrieving party, all of a sudden , a single shot took the life of Captain Akash Rabbani, he was hit by a sniper shot…later we searched the area and found the militant sniper, our sniper then shot him…the major threat were these hiding snipers, who were well conversed with the terrain and as such inflicted casualties on own troops.’ recalls commanding officer of Yalgaar. Apart from havildar Mustafa , captain Rabbani, Sepoy Waqar of Yalgaar also embraced martyrdom.

By 14th August 2014, the area around Boya was sanitised , troops and SSG battalions in a gesture to win hearts and minds of locals also distributed food and sweets among the children, Commander Brigadier Bhutta (11SSB) also met the local maliks and local population.

Army Public School – Peshawar. 2014

There are events which are so tragic that words cannot explain them, they can only be felt ; 16th December 2014 was one such day. Over 500 hundred students ranging from Class I –X, had gone to school, with an anticipation of having a day full of activities and fun. First Aid Class was in progress when at 1013 hours all of a sudden the bursts of fire shattered the peace and dreams of these young kids. Half a dosen militants had scaled the southern wall of the school, entered into auditorium and indiscriminately started killing students, first to bear the brunt were students of Class 8th and 10th who were having the First Aid lecture. Militants in the meantime also rushed to the classrooms where they segregated the children of army personals, the innocent children not knowing what is in their fate simply raised their hands to acknowledge their father is in army, were taken out and simply shot dead. There was a chaotic situation, children running around, shouts of firing, pleas for mercy from children, weeping, sobbing it was a living hell.

After the initial shock, troops of 102 Brigade, Elite Police and Frontier Corps troops reached the school site. Lieutenant colonel Amjad the commanding officer of 7 commando Battalion narrates ' I was in Rawalpindi, standing outside the gate of GHQ in connection with a conference when I received a call on my mobile from the headquarters, informing me about some incident at army school in Peshawar, I immediately rang my second in command and ordered him to take the company. Meanwhile I turned back and within an hour I was at the toll plaza, there was a long queue of vehicles, I informed a policeman about the intended task and ask for a help to clear the area , he showed his inability. Luckily , I found a rickshaw who agreed to take me to the school area through a route which only he knew. I alongwith my runner, than sat in rickshaw and amazingly in twenty minutes through a labyrinth of narrow streets he dropped us close to the site, my troops were there and I took control of situation.

By 1120 hours, the company of 7 Commando Battalion was inside the school compound, where already Inspector General Frontier Corps {IGFC} and few officers were present, including Brigadier Tariq Saeed, his wife a teacher was inside the compound. At 1105 hours the warning order was received by the Zarrar Company and within 45 minutes the company was airborne, they were taken in two sorties of Mi-17 helicopters, {four helicopters I first wave and one helicopter in second sortie, and three helicopters in third sortie}. Zarrar landed at Peshawar sports stadium at 1253 hours. General Officer Commanding SSG Major General Abid Rafique also reached the site.

It was a highly sensitive operation, lives of children were at stake and militants had all the intention of killing all of the hostages, At 1345 hours after taking into account all possibilities, GOC SSG gave the go ahead for a 'hasty clearance'. Snipers were already placed in position.

The teams of Zarrar after entering the school compound started moving forward, fire was coming from multiple direction. The militants had now taken the hostages into the administration block, from where they were not only firing upon the own troops but also throwing grenades. At 1512 hours, one of the militant just came out of the room and blasted himself, the splinters caused injuries to own troops. Thus the situation was precarious, any further delay and militants would have blown all the hostages . Another militant in similar fashion blew himself up at 1538 hours. Meanwhile Zarrar teams were able to extricate the three teachers and two children who were hiding in washroom, through the ventilator. A militant was shot daed while he was crossing the corridor, he immediately exploded. As the Zarrar closed in the militants started exploding themselves. Timely and gallant action of Zarrar saved further seven female and five male teachers.

By 1712 hours , the militants were killed and compound was cleared. All in all, nine male staff, seven female staff and seven school children were rescued. Four officers and six soldiers were injured in the action.

Khyber & Orakzai Agency

Operations in Khyber and Orakzai are intertwined and interlinked mainly due to geographical proximity. Orakzai the smallest political agency among all the tribal agencies having an area of 1,538 square Kilometres, bounded by Kurram Agency in the west, Khyber Agency in the north and east, Kohat district in the south. The agency is mountainous tract dissected by numerous water channels especially in the south western part of the agency. Orakzai are the major tribe. Major militant groups in the agency are Tehreek I Taliban Pakistan and Haidari Taliban.

Khyber Agency covers an area of 2,576 square Kilometres, The Khyber Pass and Afridis have become synonym to each other, Afridi is also an Aryan tribe, and it has eight clans (Kuki Khel, Malik Din Khel, Qambar Khel, Kamar Khel, Zakha Khel, Aka Khel, Sepah and Adam Khel). Each clan has its own territory, Kuki Khel controls the eastern mouth of Khyber Pass and then road passes through Zakha Khel territory. Qambar Khel has Bara under their control, Adam Khel controls Darra Adam Khel, and Malik Din occupies Maidan. The other tribes of Khyber are Shinwari, Mullagori and Shilman but they are on the northern side and even among them only Shinwari are in great strength. There are two Militia Corps, namely Khyber Rifles and Mahsud Scouts deployed in the Khyber Agency. A political agent have three assistant political agents (Bara, Jamrud, Landai Kotal), each APA have two –three political tehsildars and naib tehsildars under him (Bara, Tirah, Jamrud, Mullagori, Landai Kotal, Bazar, Torkham)..

Darra Adam Khel (DAK) – Op Eagle Swoop-II. Indus Highway was closed and militants' attack on LEAs and abduction of government officials became a norm in DAK. Resultantly, Frontier Corps conducted Op Eagle Swoop-II to open the Indus Highway and flush out the militants. Operation progressed well and on **22 September 2008**, Indus highway was secured and opened for all kinds of traffic.

Op Daralam & Sirat-e-Mustaqeem. Militants' activities witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in the adjacent areas of Peshawar and NATO Logistic Convoys were frequently attacked on Road Jamrud-Torkhum. Operation Daralam was conducted from 30 December 2008 to **19 January 2009** to flush out the militants from the adjacent areas of Peshawar in Khyber Agency and secure Road Jamrud-Torkhum. Operation was successful and achieved its objective. During the operation, 318 x militants including 125 x Afghans were arrested with huge quantity of weapons and ammunition. Operation Serat-e-Mustaqeem was conducted in Bara Area of Khyber Agency. Operation progressed well and Bara has been largely secured.

Khyber Agency which hitherto had remained free from the miscreants pestilence slowly and gradually went under their control, state's writ was restricted to the main road Peshawar-Torkham and few kilometres of border around Torkham; abduction, planting of IEDs, fire raid on NATO and own military convoys was the order of the day. Lashkar Islam{LI} headed by Mangal Bagh emerged as the main potent force challenging the writ of government, after his initial success Mangal Bagh almost became an icon and as such attracted the attention of main Taliban elements who now swarmed into area for protection, safe haven and to reinforce

Mangal Bagh. Miscreants move with impunity in almost everywhere. Mangal Bagh threatened security forces convoys for Jarobi and Tirah, consequently supply through road ceased and troops were administered through helicopters[7].

Khawak Ba De Sham 24th November 2009

Sequel to conduct of successful operations by Frontier Corps in Bajaur, Mohmand Agencies and South Waziristan Agency (under command Army), militants were uprooted from these areas. They were forced to restrict their activities in few areas where they were trying to re-establish themselves for continuation of their nefarious agenda. South Eastern part of Khyber Agency and Orakzai Agency were few such places providing safe heavens to the miscreants. Being in close vicinity and availability of routes, the miscreants were carrying out their activities in Peshawar and Kohat. They also tried to create law and order situation in Kurram Agency in consonance with warring Shia and Sunni elements in these areas. Kidnapping for ransom became a routine practice. The road Thall – Parachinar was completely closed and heavy escorts were required for move of LEAs convoys. Owing to the deteriorated situation, **Operation Khwakh Ba De Sham was launched in Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai Agencies**. Kinetic Operations in Orakzai Agency are concluded while policing operation continued. The area of Mamozai was dealt with air / aviation efforts. Major portion of the Agency has been cleared and a massive blow to the terrorists was given. Sealing of routes to Waziristan has been achieved. Road Parachinar – Thall has been opened for all sort of convoys. Cease fire between both sects after strenuous efforts by the Frontier Corps has been achieved and situation is on the mend. Besides strong holds of militants in area mentioned above, their sanctuaries in Dogar, Shashu, Spirkot, Pastawana, Sharku Land, Shahu Khel, Hangu and Upper Kurram have been cleared. During operation, 447 militants were killed and more than 2893 were apprehended/ surrendered. 135 All ranks embraced Shahadat and 623 got injured. Huge cache of weapons and ammunition was also recovered / confiscated from the militants

Operation Mirozai Sar, February 2013

Mirozai Sar is located on the western bank of river Bara at an elevation of 4541 feet, overlooking Muzaital Kandow on Pakistan – Afghanistan border, it had just one village Narai Baba, it also keeps an eye on the sole vehicular route in the area which is the blood line of hashish trade. Other important villages in the surroundings includes, Mangal Bagh, Nangrosa, Kandow and Bokar. Road leading from Kachkol Valley through Dwa Toi, Nangrosa, Mastak along Bara river to Bara and settled areas is also dominated by this Sar. Mirozai sar is an integral part of Tirah valley and after Waziristan was the hub of miscreants who used the innumerable traditional routes to move across the frontier and border unchecked.

First attempt to clear Mirozai Sar was initiated on 13th January 2013 when Zakkha Khel were persuaded to capture the high ground with own troops providing fire support . tanks, 120 mm mortars, 25 pounder gun and 3 inch Howitzer were in direct support; however the top remained with miscreants and even the second attempt on 7th February 2013 also fell short

7 *War Diary*, Khyber Rifles.

of victory. Lashkar Islam had converted the Mirozai Sar as their strong point, well prepared trenches and bunkers were dug to withstand heavy artillery shells, it had a strength of 80-100 miscreants; major threat was from the IEDs planted by them all around similar to army units having a mine field around a post.

Khyber Rifles had one wing in the Tirah valley {No.2 Wing} additional forces were called upon which included an additional company of Khyber Rifles, two tanks, and air support was also made available, artillery guns were palced at {one 155mm Howitzer & one 25 pounder gun at Mangal Bagh Kandao, and two 25 pounder guns at Dre Ghakhai Kandao}. The first objective was to clear the assault route which due to heavy snowfall was unfit for any vehicular traffic. Bomb disposal parties played key and vital role in this aspect , they cleared over 54 IEDs.

In the first phase , air sorties were called upon between 0800-0815 hours, 9th February 2013, aviation support got late due to weather but later they pounded the hideouts with five 200 pounds bombs at Mirozai Sar, Katakanri and Deily Morcha, artillery and armour also joined hands hitting the bunkers at Raghakhi and Kando Marozai.

In a set piece battle while the aircraft were hitting the top, the Zakkha Khel fighters started climbing up the ridge from Mangal Bagh Kandao and Dre Ghakhi Kandao , Khyber rifles troops wee following the heels. Bomb disposal parties were also in the assault phase and after neutralisation of bunkers at top they cleared the area, a total of 40 IEDs were diffused. Stiff resistance came from Khazana Morcha but soon it was silenced, SOG, Commandant escort, Wing Commander escort also followed the trail and by mid-day the Mirozai Top was in the hands of Khyber Rifle

Operation Khyber –March 2013

Khyber agency occupies a special place in the history of Frontier Corps, due to its octopus configuration it generates residual effects in surrounding areas, if Khyber is peaceful then Peshawar also remains peaceful or vice versa. After the successful operations in Bajaur, Mohmand, Swat and lastly in Orakzai Agencies the terrorists of all outfits took refuge in Kachkol & Tirah Valley; both afford good weather, water, food and good defensive natural hamlets. Tirah Maidan was initially held by the Ansar Ul Islam , which had a soft and friendly outlook towards the state and military, Ansar Ul Islam had a lashkar of their own and they were putting a stiff resistance to the incursion of the Taliban among them; the military assumption that this lashkar at its own can hold the Taliban was correct but to an extent. By end of 2012, the lashkar was routed and Kachkol valley along with Tirah Maidan was occupied by the Taliban. Zakkha Khel the loyal tribe now had a second thought on their alliance, the key word among tribal allegiance is to bank upon the winner. Frontier Corps and army jointly carried out deliberations and in the end frontier corps put forward three options to tackle the Taliban in Tirah, the options primarily varied in terms of ground approaches; on 28th March 2013 the plan was approved. This was the biggest military operation in Tirah since the 1897 campaign.

Additional army units were called upon which included Punjab Regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Riffat Ullah,, two commando battalions , light commando battalion of Azad Kashmir Regiment under command Lieutenant Colonel Sajjad Hussain, frontier force Regiment, Northern Light Infantry and Khyber Rifles which had a company, a platoon of SOG and tribal volunteers of Zakkha Khel, Lieutenant Colonel Ejaz Mahmood was the commander, overall command was entrusted to Colonel Muhammad Fayyaz, Commandant Khyber Rifles. Plan was to have the force crushed the miscreants in a two prong offensive, northern prong was relatively heavier than the southern prong{southern prong was under command army brigade}. Fundamentally one option was to clear the area by remaining within the limits of Khyber Agency, with Frontier force, northern light infantry and commando battalion moving, clearing and securing the area from Bazar Valley , simultaneously through Chorah valley, Azad Kashmir regiment, commando battalion, Punjab regiment and Khyber Rifles moved down through Mastak, Jarobi. In the end the adopted plan revolved around flushing not only the Tirah in Khyber but adjoining Orakzai Agency also.

Ground reconnaissance was carried out between 27th - 30th March 2014 from Mastak and Toor gund top which was held by Zakkha Khel fighters feature; intended target was not more than three kilometres away. Tactical plan was presented and discussed with major General Ghayur {IGFC} on 2nd April; plan was given the final nod next day by the Corps commander Lieutenant General ……. He himself was present at Jarobi. He suggested 'Nibbling Operations' which were carried out by Punjab Regiment, Khyber rifles company strength occupied positions at Deli Morcha.

Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf (major general) narrates that , he was attending a army level War Game at Multan when during the mid day break he received an urgent message from Brigadier Ejaz (Combat Group Commander) to immediately report at Peshawar as an operation is likely to be undertaken very soon.

In January 2008 when FC had started operations in the Barra Valley, Cobras supported the actions of Mahsud Scouts; aim of the operations was to counter the militancy which was still in infancy, to ensure the safety of the land routes between Khyber and Peshawar, also between the Kohat- Peshawar and to monitor the movement in the Bara Valley. On 2nd January 2008 at 1235 hours, Cobra tail number 005 piloted by Major Imran Akhtar and Major Hammad Dabir, were coming back to Peshawar after an engagement in Kurram, near Thal , they decided to fly low and during low flying they entangle wires and as such the Cobra crash landed in the mid of the River Kurram. 'Both pilots miraculously remained scratch less'. The subsequent recovery of Cobra and making it fit for flying again is a tribute to the 499 EME Battalion**.** Operation was launched in Bara Bazar, Aka Khel, Gandao and Hasan Khel (FR Peshawar) areas of Khyber Agency. Operation itself was supported by a flight of Cobras. One company each from Mahsud Scouts, Sind Regiment and SOG, supported by a battery of artillery and troop of tanks took part in this operation. It started on first light 21st March and terminated on 29th March 2009. There were three phases in the operation, few houses were destroyed through artillery fire on day one. On day two at 1200 hours Cobras provided close support.[8]

8 War Diary Mahsud Scouts.

An air operation by army aviation was conducted on 10 February 2010 in Tirah valley, Khyber Agency against a high value target. A formation of one Bell - 412 and two cobra helicopters was engaging the target effectively. Major Mudassar Razzaq Bajwa was flying a cobra helicopter. During this engagement, He maneuvered his helicopter in an extremely professional manner, unleashing his ammunition on the miscreant. He destroyed four fleeing vehicles and killed a number of miscreants. As he adjusted his helicopter aiming at a bunker, his helicopter was suspectedly hit by a rocket fired from a nearby ridge the rocket damaged the engine and tail boom of the helicopter it caught fire in midair and became uncontrollable. He tried his best to control the helicopter but in vain. The helicopter fell to the ground and was engulfed in flames in matter of seconds. Major Mudassar Razzaq and his gunner Captain Asim Karim. embraced shahadat on the spot.

Maira Sar is the highest peak ion the area over looking the Fort Salop and Shin Kamar Pass. 23 Baluch and 35 Azad Kashmir Regiments, 2W , 3W of Mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles and two companies of SOG were part of the force. Tactical headquarters was established at Shin Kamar. On 16th February 2012 aerial pounding was done in which Cobras and airforce jets took part followed by artillery fire, a troop of tank was also placed at Shin Kamar. It was a two prong advance with 8 AK regiment supporting the Lawata prong.

In another related incident, Sniper fire on Nullah post resulted in an injury to Naik Amir Muhammad Bangash of Mahsud Scouts, later a heavy contingent was sent to evacuate the injured soldiers, during the move back the QRF itself came under attack , three soldiers of 23 Baluch laid their lives while three other including two from Mahsud scouts were injured. The deadliest attack came on 2nd March 2012 at Maira sar when ten soldiers of 23 Baluch embraced shahadat and eight other were injured.

Alam Guddar was another hot spot where a operation was conducted on 10th March, 39 miscreants were killed while three own soldiers including an officer of 17 FF embraced shahadat and ten other wee injured including one from Mahsud scouts. Houses of suspected miscreant commanders including Maulvi faqir and Wazeer were demolished on 20th march 2012 and 125 suspects were arrested. Rasool jan Markaz was cordoned in the early hours of 22nd April by 2W{MS}, 3W KR, 17FF and 35 AK regiments in Aziz market area, markaz was demolished and five miscreants were killed .

After the cleansing of the North and South Waziristan, the militants took refuge in the highlands of Khyber Agency most notably in Tirah Valley. In October 2014, the preliminary operations started in Khyber Agency in which 2 and 4 Commando Battalions were deployed. 4 Commando was the main punch in Bara Valley where as 2 Commando Battalion was operating in Kohat, Bannu and Peshawar areas mostly carrying out intelligence based operations. 4 Commando operated under and with Mahsud Scouts {1st October-25th October 2014}, with 115 Brigade {26th October-18th November 2014} and with 124 Brigade {19th November – 4th December 2014}. Most remarkable was the ambush carried out by Quaid Company on 8/9th November near Peshawar, to apprehend the high value targets who were escaping from the area after strikes by PAF jets.

B 350 King Air

Cessna

13 Squadron

704
ARMY

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Khyber II- Post Army Public School Operations

The prime target was Umer Narai of Lashkar Islam was operating from Tirah valley, thus Operation Khyber II was aimed at his capture and destruction of the entire training and command system of miscreants. 11 Special Service Brigade (2, 4 & 5 commando battalions). 4 Commando Battalion undercommand Lieutenant Colonel Jawad Bhutta was given the task of clearing the inaccessible parts of Tirah Valley. The plan mainly revolved around clearing the Tirah/Dwa Toi axis and Bara Valley simultaneously employing three infantry and 11 SSB. In a broad term, 11 SSB to lead on Dwa Toi axis with 26 Brigade on heels, it was called as the western axis. On eastern axis the 53 Brigade operated along Kidney Ridge, 124 Brigade operating north of Bara River with 4 commando battalion along the Durand Line, passing through Musatil Pass and Painda China Village.

11 Special Service Brigade after accomplishing the mission , was further task to sanitize in Shaikan, Tarkho Kas, Nagharo, Javed Killi and Tor Dara, these operations started on 18th May and terminated on 10th June 2015. 4 and 6 Commando battalions participated in these operations, combat helicopters were also on call. The sanitization went as per planning, however the arms recovered were not impressive, one 12.7 mm ,only five rifles were found which included one 12 Bore as well; on the other hand ammunition were captured in high quantity.

Combat Group flew 70.3 hours in Orakzai Agency till February 2016, during which 15 TOWs, 35 Rockets and 5200 rounds of cannon were fired. Combat Group took active part in Operation Khyber 1,2 and Al Mizan. A total of 2609 flying hours were flown till February 2016, while 55 Tows, 2760 rockets and 37310 rounds of cannon were fired.

Shallow Cut- Summer 2015

In the summer of 2015, the battle again came back to North Waziristan, miscreants after loosing all the safe heavens were reported to be concentrated in Shawal valley, south of Miranshah. The Shawal Valley is bounded by Datta Khel in north, Road Razmal-Kanigram on east, Shakai Valley in south and Durand Line on west, there are series of mountains ranging from 7000-11000 feet, dotted with thick vegetation, undulating ground and seasonal nullahs. The tops were all held by miscreants namely Makki Garh, Darra Narai and Point 2965 and Point 3243. Builtup area comprised of mud huts, prominent were Lawara Narai, Punga Killi, Rwe Ware, Palgal and Zawar Killi. Intelligence reports highlighted presence of 150-200 miscreants in the area of operations, the main strength of the miscreants was in the ability to muster reinforcement from their strongholds of Gurbaz, Manna and Punge.

22 Special Service Brigade under Brigadier Mumtaz having 4 and 6 Commando Battalions (these battalions move into the area after successful operations in Khyber Valley) was given the mission of clearing these areas. Two infantry brigades namely 106 and 107 were also in support of the commandos. By evening of 4th August all reconnaissance was completed including that of Pash Ziarat. Later the SSB was placed undercommand 9 Infantry Division. While the reconnaissance was in progress the respective companies and tactical headquarters

of the battalions also move into Shawal Valley, camping in Razmak Cadet college. The task of SSB was to infiltrate deep into the hostile territory and occupy the tops; it was known as the Northern prong, while two infantry brigades were employed , one each on central and southern prong. SSB had to link up with the central prong by the last light on third day after the start of operations. As a deception , a company {Saad} was move towards the Angoor Adda.

9 Infantry Division spearheaded the campaign, with 22 SSB, 106 and 117 Infantry Brigades; outline plan was to advance on a three pronged axis. Commando Battlions (4 and 6), 19, 40, 59, 68 Baluch Regiments; 15,41,63 Frontier Force Regiments along with 36 Azad Kashmir Regiment supported by troops of 41 Horse and 50 Field artillery took part in the operation. Army Aviation's involvement in the operation was in terms of Cobras, Mi-17 and Bell 412.

31 Combat Aviation Squadron , 25 Army Aviation Air Assault Squadron and 27 Army Aviation Squadrons alongwith 9 Aviation Squadron took part in this month long operation. These helicopters were already in support of 11 Corps and stationed at Wana and Miranshah . FOB carried out elaborate planning in order to ensure the fuel and ammunition supply alongwith maintenance of the helicopters. Three FAARPs were established at Wana, Miranshah and Razmak. Two GPUs and one fuel bowzer was placed at Wana and one bowzer each aws available at Miranshah and Razmak.

It was anticipated that no major heliborne operation would be undertaken mainly due to the heights, yet an impromptu task can be given at any time. Casualty evacuation of troops was assigned to the Mi-17s who were also task to act as the quick reaction force of the infantry division. Bell 412 to act as the search and rescue helicopter for the Cobras. During planning phase, the ammunition and fuel for helicopters was calculated as two engagements per day for the first fifteen day sand then single engagement for next fifteen days. Cannon ammunition has been calculated at moderate rate ie. 300 rounds per Cobra in each engagement with two engagements per day for the first fifteen days.. For subsequent 15 days the rate of engagement is one engagement per day. Similarly the rockets were calculated at a rate of 6 rockets per Cobra in each engagement at the rate of two engagements per day for first fifteen days. For subsequent days the rate of engagement is one engagement daily. Fuel calculation was based upon with Cobras consuming 1000 litres per sortie, 1200 litres for Bell 412 and 1400 litres for Mi-17. Overall 424,000 litres of fuel was required at Wana and Jandola; similarly 63680 rounds of cannon and 1350 rockets were foreseen at above mentioned two places.

On 19th August 2015, operation started at 1700 hours when the battalions reached their jump off point. PAF aircraft conducted precision bombing of miscreants hideouts and strongholds. First objective was the Point 2973 and Point 2885. Commandos move was in darkness, navigation in mountainous terrain is a difficult task in daylight and becomes hazardous in hours of darkness; same was experienced during this move, companies did get strayed but soon regained their original bearings. Lieutenant Colonel Shahid took a timely tactical decision by separating two combat teams and straight heading for the designated target; large body of troops was hindering the swift march. It proved correct as by morning the battalion had reached and captured the first objective Makki garh.

Induction of Mi 35

Army Aviators at Wanna during Operation Shawal and Shallowcut

Army Aviators at Wanna during Operation Shawal and Shallowcut

Taliban reacted swiftly by launching a counter attack to recapture the lost ground but it was repulsed by the battalions, another arid was repulsed on 22nd August . For another week, the battalion held the position defying all attacks of Taliban, meanwhile 4 Commando Battalion also reached its objective Wucha Darra without encountering any worthwhile opposition. During the later half of operations, the IEDs took their toll, Captain Basharat Fareed, Havildar Nabi, Havildar Mushtaq , Sepoy Aftab and Sepoy Aatim Masih all were injured due to blasts, Naik Nazakat of Essa Company (4 Commando) embraced shahadat on 29th August 2015 due to an IED blast.

Due to fluid and impromptu requirement of the operation, many a time's helicopters had to opearte from difficult and dangerous helipads like Pregarh and Ziarat Kai. Capture of Pregarh top is a testimony to this fact. Pregarh is the highest feature in the area with a height of 11,484 feet which dominates area . Talibans had sited a HMG on top which afforded domination of the area. PAF strikes eliminated the HMG and a company ex 37FF was tasked to seize Pregarh. The troops which were tasked to capture the top went with personal weapons with first line ammunition and a day's ration and water only. A dire need of heavy weapon was felt and Mi-17 was tasked to air lift heavy weapons to Pregarh top. MI-17 lifted 3 x 12.7 machine guns, Battery of 120 mm Mortors and Battery of 81 mm Mortors from Samm and safely dropped at Pregarh .

Army Aviation flew 49 hours, Cobras consumed 17, Bell 412 did 13 and Mi-17 logged 19 hours. 60 rockets and 1040 rounds of cannon were fired. 289 troops were heli shifted within the area, a cargo load of 28200 Kilograms was also lifted. 7 casulties and equal number of shaheeds were also lifted.

Campaign Plan- 2016

In 2016, 11 Corps planned to evict all miscreants from the uncleared areas of North and South Waziristan Agencies. Operation was code name as Campaign Plan, it was launched in the month of March. It had two prongs, on Prong I , 22 SSB (6 and 3 Commando Battalions) lead the advance with the mission to clear area from Kundi Ghar till Zoe top; while on second prong 1 Commando Battalion was earmarked for advance to clear area from Sir Garh till Taimora Village. Both prongs thus had to join at Taimora in first phase; the link up had to be in position by 16th March 2016

Subsequently both prongs had to advance forward till they join each other at Baiza Feature, at the latest by 15th April 2016, finally in the end the commandos had to advance till the Meman Punga by 30th April . After clearing of these areas the 22 SSB in the final assault was task to occupy the Shaga Sharkai by 30th may 2016. The major villages and pocket of resistance was expected at Dabbar Miami, Dabari, Mana and Gurbuz. The area of operation itself is bounded by Mira Din in north, Road Wanna- Angoor Adda in south, Villages of Dabbri Miami and Aasman Punga in the east and Durand Line in the west. There were two infantry divisions , one on each prong, the SSB was undercommand 9 Infantry Division, where as 1 Commando Battalion was undercommand 7 Infantry Division.

The advance was not an easy task as no less than 300-350 foreigner fighters wee reportedly present in the area. The important passes of Maghrotai and Zoe –Narai were vital as they allowed the miscreants to get reinforcement across the Durand Line.

Operation unfolded as per planning and troops achieved the desired results, reconnaissance started from early February when commanding officers of 3 and 6 Commando battalions alongwith their officers undertook the reconnaissance. They did came under miscreants attack and fire on 21st February 2016, however own snipers quickly neutralised them. On 26th February , 3 Commando undercommand Lieutenant Colonel Sajid Malik moved from Wanna , the plan was that Hamza Company will lead the battalion as assaulting company followed by Yaqub, Ebrahim and Zikriya companies; they were able to capture the objective by 0200 hours 27th February through deception , chivalry and by surprise.

6 Commando took over the operations from 27th February onwards and immediately they came under intense miscreants fire attack, it was a long night of hard fighting. In the morning the Taliban launched fresh attacks on the 6 Commando battalion , Havildar Zia embraced martyrdom and later the post was named after him; Captain Zafar, Sepoy Khalid and Sepoy Habib also suffered injuries in the battle. Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Aziz was hit by miscreants bullets in abdomen while carrying out reconnaissance of the area and was evacuated. However the main objective of capturing the high ground and keeping it under own control was achieved.

Linkup between the 7 and 9 infantry divisions was finally achieved

Induction of Mi-35

Mi-35 ‘Hind” is the main anti tank gunship helicopter of Russian Army, it was first unveiled to the Western world in 1977 and created a great anxiety among the NATO. It was also inducted in Indian Army in 1980s and was the major concern for Pakistani military thinkers. Hind was also extensively employed by the Russians during Afghan War (1979-1989). Hind is conceptually very different from the standard concept of a gun ship . Hind apart from its massive armament also has the capability to carry five armed soldiers apart from a crew of three. Russia offered these gunships to Pakistana as a sign of goodwill. On 14th August 2015 contract was signed with Rosoboron Export for the Mi-35.

A team of pilots and technical crew led by Lieutenant Colonel Usman Aftab spent over six months in Russia, technicians had a course of three months and pilots underwent six months training flying 60 hours including firing of missiles .training was conducted near Moscow. It is worth highlighting that Mi-35 is NVG capable and is armed with air to air missiles also alongwith anti tank guided missiles and rockets alongwith 23mm twin barrelled gun. Another distinct feature of Mi-35 is the fact that all crew members are equipped with parachutes, in Russia during the flying training the flying was conducted by wearing parachutes. Mi-35s arrived at Rawalpindi in a chartered flight and were assembled and flown to Quetta via Multan. At Quetta a formal induction ceremony was held. Mi-35 also conducted live firing at Quetta and at Muzzaffargarh ranges.

Change of Command 2024. Maj Gen Nadeem Yousaf handing over command to Maj Gen Saeed Khan

Change of Command 2018. Maj Gen Khalil Dar handing over command to Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar

Maj Gen Saeed with 9 Army Aviation Squadron 2024

GOC Maj Gen Saeed with 2 FARR Company

Radd-Ul-Fasaad & Faseel-E- Ahan. 2017

Both operations are interlink, having a common aim and mission to eliminate the last strongholds of militants. Raad –Ul-Fasaad is based upon intelligence information and requires surgical strikes in the heart of terror. Faseel –E-Ahan operation was launched in 2017, to fence the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan thus denying the militants to enter Pakistan and tribal areas without proper checking. Militants retaliated by conducting acts of terror. Intelligence based operation were conducted against terrorists in which the Cobra was the key to the suppression and elimination of militancy. Cobras by virtue of their ability and capability to strike at the militants irrespective of terrain and distance proves a decisive factor. On 7th March 2017, during one such operation, conducted in Malikabad (Swabi District), at 1000 hours , the ground forces had encircled the militant's compound but were facing stiff resistance thus Cobras were called in direct support. Such situation demands extra precision on part of the Cobra crew, they have to avoid fratricide. Rockets as a thumb rule are seldom fired when own and militants are in a close proximity unless captain of Cobra is sure about the precise location and is moving ahead of the ground operation; it also requires high degree of concentration on part of gunner as well. Pair of Cobras attacked the compound from multiple directions, the attack pattern requires Cobras to dive from height thus attaining speed of 120 Knots, firing and pulling up for successive engagement. The wingman follows the leader and keep an eye not only on the target but also on the surrounding area. One Cobra was hit with a bullet while pulling up , still the formation continued the engagement and ensured that ground operation meets its objectives. Major Usman Nagra, Major Umair Rehman and Major Malik Ameer Hamza Awan were mentioned in dispatches for their professional handling.

Sapera Sar – April 2018

Bajaur after the successful elimination of terrorists still have few gaps along the international border which are porous in nature and thus facilitate the movement of miscreants. It was decided in principle in the February 2018 to close these gaps, most vital being a stretch of 9.5 Kilometers; a peak by the Sapera if under own control can effectively check these movements. Thus between 31st March-15 April 2018 an operation was launched in Bajaur in which Army Aviation played a key role, five Cobras, two Bell 412, two Mi-17 and one Fennec took part. 'this operation was expected to ameliorate security situation in Bajaur Agency and to deny exploitation of same area to terrorist's action in Dir and larger Malakand Agency'. On 5th April 2018 at 0540 hours the first sortie of two Cobras alongwith one Bell 412 took off and was overhead own troops within five minutes. Two Combat Flights provided aerial cover to own troops till last light, during which three engagements and four cover missions were given. This was the only day in which Cobras fired. In the first Vick, Lieutenant Colonel Imaad and Major Basalat (Cobra 023) alongwith major Yasir and Major Waqar (Cobra 046) and Major Taimoor and Colonel Munir (Bell 205) were in air. 270 rounds of cannon were fired at Shaheedano. Ground troops had been fired upon thus suppressing fire was carried out. In the next sortie which took off at 0815 hours, commanding officer again led with Major Basalat as his gunner followed by Major Aftab and Major Fakhar with Major Zia and Major Sibtain in Bell.

Lwara Mandi -2019

Army Aviation flew 44804 hours in the period between 1 July 2018 -30 June 2019. Comparatively it had flown 54084 hours between July-June 2017-2018.

The major operation of the year 2019 was **Operation Alwara** which was conducted between 28 April -30 June 2019. Alwara Mandi is a small town north west of Miranshah. As a sequel to operation Rad ul Fasad, 7 Division planned to carry on the success and eliminate the militants in their stronghold area, main aim was to overcome the resistance to the fencing of the border with Afghanistan thus eradicating the supply and escape routes of the militants. Five Cobras, three newly inducted Mi-35, one Bell 412, two Mi-17 and one Fennec helicopter participated in the operation. (33, 21 and 4 Army Aviation Squadrons).

Major Ameer Niazi of 33 Squadron recalls , 'we pilots started gathering at Miranshah in first week of April 2019. The major cause of this particular operation was the abduction and killing of own troops by militants near Alwara Mandi. 7 Division had secured the area ahead of Datta Khel and a forward supply base was established at Maidan. The area as seen from the cockpit is typical Wazir territory mostly barren, however close to Alwara Mandi are clumps of tree just like Murree and militants were hiding within these clumps..Jpanga is the highest feature in the area with an elevation of around 8000 feet, it is a ridge line which extends into Afghanistan and Pakistan Army and Afghan Army both have posts on the same ridge line. Our flying time from Miranshah to Datta Khel was 15 minutes. Cobras provided aerial cover to own troops, SSG was leading the advance. We would maintain speed of 70-80 knots during aerial cover missions. There were days when we provided cover throughout the day, logging even 3,1 flying hours on one sortie. Our safety altitude was 1500 feet AGL, thus it was quite difficult to engage the militants at the top of Jpanga.'. One of the major feature of this operation was the night combat engagement by the Mi-35. Army Aviation carried out 49,677 Kgs of sling load, 60, 577 Kgs of cargo during the operation. Moreover 436 soldiers were transported through helicopters , 60 casualties were evacuated along with five shaheeds. Overall during the year 4363 hours were flown in support of 11 Corps, Mi-17 flew the most hours (452) followed by Fennec (409), Cobras and Bell 412 flew 371 and 321 hours respectively. Cobars fired 2485 rounds of cannon alongwith Mi-35 firing 320 rounds. No TOWs were fired during the year in support of 11 Corps which highlights the state of affairs; the grip of militants over the area was now very weak and they lacked strongholds. In totality 2846 persons were shifted through Army Aviation , 257 casualties were evacuated apart from 35 shaheeds.

In Southern Command area during the year 2006 hours were flown; Bell 412 logged the most hours (1296) followed by Mi-17 having 418 hours. The expenditure of ammunition and types area good indicator to understand the relevant situation in the area of operation, Cobras neither flew in the area and nor any TOW, cannon or rocket was fired. Bell 412 fired 8955 rounds of Gatling. 201 casualties were evacuated and 462 persons were air transported.

There were 13 notable operations undertaken by Army Aviation in support of Southern Command between August 2018 – July 2019. The unique features of these operations is the

De Commissioning of Y 12

FOB 2018

From L-R: Brig Nasir, Brig Shaheen (Lt Gen), Col Munir (Brig Retd)

Army Aviators of Operations Alwara Mandi with GOC Maj Gen Najib 2019

Lt Gen Ghafoor

Maj Gen Nadeem
(GOC Aviation)

COAS Gen Bajwa

Maj Gen Nadeem (GOC Army Aviation)
Combat Group 2022

increase and effectiveness of IBO, in these operations only Bell 412 or at the most Mi-17 took part; the standard pattern that evolved required a pair of Bell 412 in IBOs as in case of Operation Robdar (28 August 2018) in this only a pair of Bell 412s took part. In the Operation Turbat 28-30 September 2018, two Bell 412 and two Mi-17 took part , Bell fired 1200 rounds of cannon in this. Similarly in Operation Nail Kaur 12-14 November 2018, Kulbar Kaur 28-30 December 2018, Buzi Pass 20-23 April 2019, Blue Search 1-3 May 2019 and Operation arrow-IV 13-16 June 2019; no ammunition was expended On the other hand, ammunition (only cannon) was fired in Operations namely Saji Mountains 10 April 2019, Hazarganji 25-27 January 2019, Pingora 15-17 January 2019; yet the number of rounds fired were quite less in number.

Army Aviation (Combat Group) also took part in the operations carried out in the Northern Areas. Militants from the onset of the millennium have been spreading their venomous agenda in the remote areas of the Northern Areas. It must be highlighted that majority of security issue had their root cause in the half a dosen valleys astride Chilas among which Darail and Tangir stands out. Between 9 August -11 October 2018, Fennec helicopters supported 10 Corps operation in these two valleys. 105 hours were flown, five rockets and 100 rounds of cannon were fired.

Army Aviation Operations in 2019-2020

Between 1 July 2018- 30 June 2020, Army Aviation flew 90,101.5 hours , flying almost identically in these two years, logging 44804.4 hours between July 2018-June 2019 and flying further 45,382.9 hours in the remaining period.

In Southern Command AOR, total of 2055 hours were flown, Bell 412 with Gatling gun was in forefront. In 11 Corps AOR 2237 hours were flown, Mi-17 and Cobra combat team (2 Cobras , one Bell 412) were employed extensively, Mi-35 also took part in the operation.

Tango Hunt was launched in last week of April 2020 (18-30 April) , 170 hours wee flown in support of ground troops. Three Bell 412, one Mi-17, two Mi-35 and two Cobras took part. Khuzdar was selected as base of operation. during the operation 1310 rounds of Gatling, 371 rounds of M240, and 76 rounds of 23 mm cannon alongwith five pirotech cartridges were fired. 718 troops were transported and dropped in operational area alongwith 9120 Kilograms of load. In the same area another operation **Swift & Deep** was carried out between 13-18 August 2020.During this operation only two Bell 412 and one Mi-17 were employed. 325 ground troops were transported and Nell 412 fired 7260 rounds of Gatling gun and 150 rounds of cannon were fired. All in all Army Aviation participated in 37 Intelligence based operations (IBO) in SC AOR.

In 11 Corps AOR the major operation was carried out **North of Dwatoi** between 28 April 25 July 2019. Five Cobras, three Mi-35, two Bell 412 , two Mi-17 and two Fennec helicopters were used; mainly during last three phases of operation. 188 hours were flown.

Operations Khyber V was conducted between 26 August -02 September 2019, mainly a logistic operation in which Mi-17 provided critical logistics through sling drops; 9 hours were flown.

Swift Blow operation was carried on 3rd September 2019, two companies of 3 Commando Battalion was inserted with the help of two Mi-17s while one Combat Team provided air cover during induction and deinduction phases, 22 hours were flown.

During the year 70 casualties were evacuated through Medevac in 11 Corps AOR, it includes seven missions conducted under NVG, 20 hours were flown. Overall 141 hours were flown.

COVID and Army Aviation

COVID was a phenomenon which engulfed the entire world, it was unprecedented in nature as all countries blocked their borders, offices and educational institutions, sea ports, airports were closed, people were requested and forced to remain inside their homes. It all started in the mid December 2019 when the first news of a virus spreading from China hit the headlines, initially there were only precautionary instructions from governments but by mid February 2020 the panic gripped the population and there an abundance of rumours about the epidemic and the unending cures.

Army Aviation way of life, everyday routine is entirely different from other regiments and arms. Flying had to be undertaken irrespective of the epidemic like; missions in support of field formations, training flights in army Aviation School, the checkouts of pilots, night flying, NVG flying to name few. Pilots, flight engineers and crew chiefs flew with masks, it was initially quite cumbersome to talk on RT with mask on but gradually it became routine. All aircraft and helicopters were sanitized after every mission and sortie. Met/Atc briefs were also carried out as per routine, only difference from past was in the gap between the chairs which was increased. In crew rooms also the sitting layout was changed . Troops on leave on joining back had to undergo 15 days of quarantine. in one incident, the wife and children of a soldier had gone on leave and on their coming home, they were put in quarantine and soldier was also put in quarantine alongwith ration for 15 days. It's a tribute to the flying and maintenance crew that despite all odds they performed their task up to the desired level.

Evacuation kits were indigeniously developed by 699 EME Battalion for Mi-17 and C-208 aircraft for transportation of corona affected soldiers; as amatter of fact even coffin boxes were made specifically for transporation of COVID dead bodies it provided effective sealing.

2021-22. Post USA withdrawl from Afghanistan

Country as a whole came out of the impact and effects of COVID-19, Pakistan Army had almost eliminated the cancer of militancy but as history tells us, that such cleanup requires patience and time. The frequency and number of engagements carried out by Cobras and the use of weapons is a rational indicator of how the Pakistan Army with its dedication, sacrifices

and determination has overcome the menace of terror: there has been no engagement which required firing of TOWs. The use of intelligence base operations (IBO) became the main thrust of campaign to eliminate anti state groups. One of the most drastic event was the withdrawl of USA from Afghanistan and coming back of Taliban into the power. it aws hoped that the situation at the border with Afghanistan will be stabilized and the terrorists groups will not be aided by the state in Kabul ; this draem aws short lived as the militants kept on using the Afgahn territory to infiltrate into own territory and then escaped into the safety of Afghan warlords.

4 Squadron 'Gallants' alone took part in 74 IBOs between July 2019 –October 2021 in Southern Command area of operations., logging 4377 operationaql flying hours; it heli-evacuated 106 casulties from the operational engagements. Two FOBs were established , one at Turbat and other at Khuzdar and Gallants were placed at both places. For the security of Quetta city , army checkposts were established at the mountain peaks;, these posts were being supplied with ration and water through Mi-17 helicopters. A dedicated quick reaction force or anti terrorist patrol was always ready at Khalid airbase.

Among the 74 IBOs conducted in SC, only nine operations required employment of Mi-35, otherwise asa thumb rule majority of opeartions were undertaken by pair of Bell 412 and Mi-17. Operation Nawaz III conducted between 13-20 March 2020 aws the first operation in which a pair of Mi-35 also took part. Again in Tango Hunt which lasted from 16-30 April 2020, pair of Mi-35 were at the lead , this was the major operation and it consumed 170 flying hours (Bell 412, Mi-17 and Mi-35)., followed by Operation Qitran III 25-30 April 22020 in which pairs of Mi-35 and Bell 412 took part. In terms of hours . Winter of 2020-2021 saw a surge in militant activities and were equally retaliated by own troops. Starting with Opeartion Surgarh Saturation (6-14 October 2020) followed Opeartion Swift and Deep III Gwargo (20-25 December 2020), Opeartion South Shahrag on 18th January 2021, Opeartion Dogan by FC North (8-10 February 2021; infact maximum opeartions were conducted in February 2021 which includes Operations Balgor by FC South, Swift & Deep IV ' Nagao". These opeartions consumed around 200 flying hours. Major event aws the militant attack on Khan Zaman Post on the night of 17/18 February 2021 in the aftermath own SSG troops were heli dropped and provided aerial cover.

In the 11 Corps area, intensity of operations was rather moderate as no TOW was fired. Around 6628 operational hours were flown in support of the field formations in which 31 rockets, 2420 cannon rounds, 195 rounds of M240H and 1716 rounds of Gatling were fired. When these figures are compared with the ammunition expended before Zarb Azab, a stark reality emerges that the backbone of terrorism was almost broken and only splinters groups were operating in the area.

Another notable achievement of Army Aviation in this period has been the casualty evacuation which became paramount , with flying crew being proficient in NVG the missions were often undertaken during hours of darkness, 4317 hours were flown in 10, 11 and 12 Corps araes exclusively for medical evacuation. Just to highlight how the casualty evacuation works, on 7th January 2020 at 1700 hours a vehicle of Thall Scouts met a road accident near Thall

Fort, luckily all passengers survived apart from two soldiers who had critical injuries and were required to be evacuated immedialy to Peshawar CMH. Major Abdullah and Major Kamran Saleem were the NVG pair at Peshawarand they got the mission from Lieutenant Colonel mazhar Ali the GSO I at FOB , who briefed them regarding the mission. major Abdullah writes, ‘ we carried out risk assessment, detailed planning of primary route, alternate route, minimum safe altitude to be maintained at various key points, alternate airfields and helipads. We also revised emergency procedures for NVG while waiting for the anesthetist and medical team to arrive. They took off under clear sky, light and variable winds; however they were in knowledge about the weather buildup , so they had literraly very less time available at Thall Fort. As they were about to land , the weather started building up and by the time they took off the visibility had reduced, luckily there was no rain but thunder was there. They opted to fly back at 5500. ‘ right in front of us were clouds, we were facing approximately 6-7 Octas, winds were getting turbulent by the minute… we desended down to 4500 feet and yet the clouds followed us.’. they informed Kohat reagarding possible landing and got the airfield ready.

Major Kamran the captain of Mi-17 decided to come low , down to 1000 feet and started following Hangu-Kohat Road, he made full use of his experience in NVG, scanner was put on alert and keeping in view the condition sof soldiers the air crew kept flying and after ten minutes they came out of the clouds and visibility also became clear and finally they landed at Peshawar. Both soldiers survived and are serving in Thall Scouts.

In another incident, on 31st October 2019, Pakistan Railways train travelling from Karachi to Rawalpindi caught fire in its third bogey and required immediate evacuation. Desert Hawks got the mission at 0545 hours and Major Yasir Jamal was detailed as captain of Puma. ‘ I got the mission at 0600 hours and by the time I reached the airfield which took 22 minutes, my operations officer had already filed the flight plan, ground crew was at the helicopter, I meanwhile studied the weather, route and got the briefing, weather was hazy but my commanding officer keeping in view the nature of mission allowed the mission to proceed.’ On arrival , Puma landed at a unprepared helipad, there were overa dosen seriously burnt casualties, Pakistan Army and civil administration ambulances were there , Puma evacuated 14 seriously burnt passengers to Multan.

Operation Shamat Bar Sarmachar
(20–26 February 2024)

Background

Operation Shamat Bar Sarmachar was conducted from 20 to 26 February 2024 in the mountainous Sangan Valley, a corridor between Sibbi to the south and Harnai Valley to the north. The operation aimed to neutralise militant hideouts and regain control of the area through coordinated ground and air action. A detailed In-House Discussion (IHD) was held at HQ FC (North) on 18 February to finalise joint air–ground plans. Officers from the Cobra, Bell-412, and Mi-17 elements attended. From 26 Squadron, Lt Col Hacan participated as part of the Bell detachment. Overall aviation command rested with Commander 26 Sqn, Col Kazim, who served as Mission Leader, directing both tactical and support flights.

Aircrew and Assets

Bell-412 Flight (3 aircraft)

- Tail 214: Col Kazim (Comd 26 Sqn) / Maj Farooq
- Tail 220: Lt Col Hacan / Capt Haseeb
- Tail 221: Maj Sibtain / Maj Hammad

Mi-17 Flight (3 aircraft)

- Tail 626: Lt Col Munawar / Maj Agha
- Tail 637: Lt Col Hussain / Capt Adnan
- Tail 654: Maj Ubaid / Maj Javeed Raisani

Operational Sequence

Two AH-1F Cobras provided initial target softening and area sanitisation before the Combat Team insertion phase. The Cobras left the area once the insertion phase commenced. The ground operation began on 20 February while the aviation phase commenced on 22 February. The initial launch took place from KAAB (Khalid Army Aviation Base, Quetta), where two Bell-412s and three Mi-17s took off together for the first Combat Team insertion. Subsequent sorties were launched from Sibbi, which served as the forward refuelling and turnaround base.

Bell-412s led each formation, conducting forward reconnaissance and confirming landing zones (LZs) prior to clearing the Mi-17s to land. Mi-17s followed approximately five knots behind until the Bells confirmed touchdown viability. After each insertion, Mi-17s returned to Sibbi for refuelling and rearming while Bells moved ahead to identify the next LZ. This cycle continued until Combat Teams established blocking positions.

Western LZs were particularly demanding, located on narrow ridgelines between 6,700 and 7,300 feet. Rotor clearance was minimal and dust-outs presented recurring hazards. Precision hover control and careful approach management were essential. Lt Col Hacan, flying Bell 412 Tail 220, personally verified more than five LZs under these challenging conditions. The Bell often remained on running rotors while approach and touchdown viability were assessed. Lt Col Abid, CO Special Operations Wing (SOW), served as liaison between air and ground forces during insertions.

During reconnaissance after the first Combat Team insertions, the Bell formation identified a fortified compound believed to be the BLA headquarters, marked by a prominent flag on a 70-foot tower. Lt Col Abid initially volunteered to remove the flag but the site was not yet cleared. Lt Col Hacan brought his Bell into a controlled hover near the mast, with Bell No. 1 providing overwatch. Door gunner Sep Noorullah attempted to remove the flag by hand; when it would not come free he used a wire cutter from the gun tool kit and detached the flag, pulling it into the aircraft. Lt Col Abid recorded the event and forwarded the footage to IG FC (North), who commended the crew.

By 24 February, all Combat Teams had been successfully inserted, repositioned and ground objectives achieved. The aviation operations concluded without incident. Bell412 & Mi-17 coordination, supported by efficient refuelling at Sibbi, enabled continuous aerial support across the campaign. The Cobras' early strikes reduced immediate threats, allowing safe insertion windows for the transport helicopters. Crews demonstrated sound judgement, adaptability, and teamwork throughout the operation. Operation Shamat Bar Sarmachar demonstrated Army Aviation's capability to operate effectively in severe mountain environments. Under Col Kazim's leadership, Bell and Mi-17 crews executed a complex sequence of insertions and support sorties, accomplishing mission objectives while maintaining safety and discipline. The recovery of the militant flag has become an enduring symbol of the operation and the courage of the aircrews involved.

Induction of Z-10 ME

On 3rd August 2025, Pakistan Army officially inducted Chinese attack helicopter Z-10ME, COAS Field Marshal Asim Munir witnessed the aerial firing display of the Z-10 ME and appreciated the crew on their professional handling.

Process of inducting new attack helicopter was initiated in 2007. There are certain criteria basing upon threat and geographical environments which influence induction of not only attack helicopters but also for any helicopter. In international arms market there are few options available in terms of attack helicopters, USA and Russia being the leader in this field. Pakistan Army Aviation inducted its first ever attack helicopter AH-1F Cobra in 1984 and they are still serving and have proven their worth in last quarter of century in fight against the terror and militancy; although Cobras were never designed to operate in high altitude. Therefore it was a rational choice and option to induct the upgraded Cobras as it allows ease of maintenance and conversion of pilots. Americans did offered Cobras in 2005 and these were inducted but they were refurbished and same holds true for induction of Cobras from Jordan.

In 2008, own pilots were sent to Italy and Spain to air test the Augusta attack helicopter, similarly Tiger attack helicopter being produced by Turkey under licence was shortlisted. in 2011, the first of Z-10 arrived in Pakistan and was extensively flown in all kind of weather and terrain environments, there were no less than 63 observations made by own pilots regarding the short comings in the helicopter. In 2018, the Turkish Tiger arrived and underwent the similar rigorous air tests; it flew with Army Aviation contingent during the 23rd March Pakistan Day Parade. Had USA not imposed restrictions on the sale of Tiger in terms of engine etc, Tiger was the most likely contender to be inducted in army aviation. Keeping in view the limitations related to USA restrictions , search for new attack helicopter was once again started afresh. Chinese in collaboration with Pakistan had been working on the upgradtion of Z-10 and all points arised by own pilots previously were addressed and once again Z-10 under the upgraded version ME arrived in Pakistan and once again put through the trials and this time around it came out with flying colours and thus formally inducted.

It is worth highlighting that in 2018, Russian gunship helicopters Mi-35 were also inducted in Pakistan Army Aviation. However there are fundamental differences between the Mi-35 and other attack helicopters like Tiger, Augusta, Cobra, Apache and Z-10 ME; whereas all are dual pilots and carry enough ammunition in terms of missiles and rockets, it is only Mi-35 which also carries around five armed soldiers on board. This makes Mi-35 an absolutely different attack helicopter as compared to other.

First batch of three Z-10 helicopters arrived in Pakistan in April 2015 ina chartered flight and were assembled at Nur Khan base and later flown to Bahawalpur. Own team comprising of two technical officers, three JCOs and seven technicians were trained at China on Z-10. Four pilots (IPs) were trained however the language barrier aws the major irritant as no Chinese IP was good enough in English to impart emergencies handling. It is worth highlighting that Chinese had installed the English language software in these helicopters.

Z-10 helicopter conducted its first ever firing in Pakistan 17-20 October 2016 followed by another firing 18-29 January 2017. four pilots took part in this firing consuming 41 hours firing 8 BA-9 missiles, 132 rockets, 854 rounds of 23-2L and 1122 rounds of cannon.

Induction of ATR 72-500

On 23rd October 2025, Army Aviation's ATR 72-500 made its maiden flight from Karachi to Gwador and back; ferrying troops. This inaugural flight is the end result of COAS Field Marshall Syed Asim Munir vision and directive which he gave in the aftermath of killing of own troops going on leave at Quetta railway station in 2024. Hard fact is that own troops are more vulnerable while proceeding and coming back from leave on public transport especially in Balochistan.

Within HQ Army Aviation Command the task of evaluating the requirement of a twin engine aircraft was given to Lieutenant Colonel Imran (G-1 Air Movement). He highlights , that CLC was overlooking the entire projest, from the onset it was obvious that any American origin aircraft will always be susceptible to various kinds of embargoes as and when situation arises thus our focus was on Air Bus, Embraer, CASA, Russian and Chinese aircraft. Option of inducting jet or jet prop were evaluated and it was agreed that jet engine aircraft has certain limitations mainly that majority of runways in Balochistan were not good enough for jet aircraft operations alongwith high cost and maintenance. ATR and its different versions were evaluated which includes ATR 72-500 which has the seating capacity of 72 soldiers and ATR 42 which has seating capacity of 45 passengers and can operate from Gilgit as well. ATRs were already on lease with national flag carrier PIA, which was in the process of terminating the lease. Pakistan Navy bought two of these ATR and Army Aviation purchased the remaining three after inspection by the manufacturer.

Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif (3rd from right) with Z-10

Army Aviation's Electrical Mechanical Engineers (EME) Battalions

Pakistan Army Aviation's maintenance battalions has been the backbone of all aviation related opeartions, words perhaps cannot do full justice to the professionalism and dedication of maintenance crew and staff. Helicopters have been operating in all kind of terrain and weather in this war on terror, they required refueling and rearming amidst hostile gun fire and erratic rocket firing. EME performed miraculous tasks to keep the fleet air worthy. Ground crew invariably has to be on the machine almosta n hour before the actual take off to carry out the ground run of the helicopter. For instance a Cobra helicopter requires an hour long checks before the first flight of the day.

199 Electrical Mechanical Engineers (EME) Battalion was raised in 1965 as an integral part of army aviation. Later, 299,399,499,599 battalions were raised, primarily to support one particular type of aircraft and a specific group of squadrons. One, base workshop (603) carryout major overhauling and repair of aircraft. Squadrons do have light aid detachment (LAD) for on field and minor repair and maintenance. From the onset of War on Terror, one light Cobra maintenance company was deployed at Peshawar, with detachments each at Wana and Miranshah since commencement of operations in 2002. Similarly for other helicopters like Bell 412, Mi-17 and Puma, separate maintenance companies and detachments are deployed at forward areas.

Pakistan Army Aviation is involved in maintenance of aircraft and helicopters of assorted origins (Russia, USA, France), the intense employment of these helicopters in the field and the resultant effect on machine stretched the field maintenance units. With no dedicated facility for depot level repair and maintenance of US origin helicopters, a need was felt to raise a medium workshop to supplement and offload the field maintenance units. Consequently in March 2004, VCOAS approved 704 Aviation Medium Workshop EME to be raised in Multan as part of restructuring of EME static installations.

All aircraft especially the helicopters requires daily inspection before the first flight, it consumes around half an hour to an hour for this. The EME ground crew has performed splendidly in the over two decade long war. They are the first one to rise and carryout the inspections often with inadequate facilities, at Miranshah and other locations the crew often carries out their duty amidst miscreants ground fire. Same procedure is repeated at last light with a detailed inspection of all aircraft. To add to this ritual are the hot refueling, arming and marshaling of the helicopter amidst the operations. Utility and cargo helicopters do have a crew chief from EME on board as well. During operations these helicopters do get damaged due to ground fire from miscreants which is often either small arms or in many cases rockets too. Then many a times the miscreants do fire unguided rockets and mortar fire on the airfield or in the general vicinity of the area where helicopters are parked. Thus , then the helicopters due require enough maintenance and repair to make them fly worthy to reach back base safely for detailed inspection and repairs. Seldom in the history of army aviation world over has such a long and sustained helicopter operation have been conducted; maintenance requirement increase manifold in such operations at frontier.

Peshawar has been the FOB and invariably all helicopters specifically Cobras operating at Miranshah, Wana, Kohat, Thal, Swat would fall back for maintenance and repair. Brigadier (retired) Asif Jah was the first FOB commander and he highlights that invariably the EME had to work after sunset thus we adopted a routine in which they would have the rest during the day. Corps HQ was very considerate regarding this and issued us with special funds for the extra tea and other comforts. Overall they have done a splendid job with dedication and high morale. The manpower was rotated fortnightly and on monthly basis.

Recovery of downed helicopters has been one of the jewel in the crown achievement of Aviation EME Battalions. Some of the most spectacular recoveries in the helicopter history around the world has been performed by these engineers and men. This includes recovery of Cobra at Kurram River and from Swat, recovery of Mi-17 from Miranshah and other similar feat in the Northern Areas as well. On induction of Bell-412 , 599 EME Battalion was assigned the responsibility of maintenance. 599 EME Battalion proficiently made use of its rich experience and skilled technical manpower to maintain this newly inducted fleet in a befitting manner. Battalion has supported more than 57,000 flying hours of Bell-412 fleet since its induction.

In 2008 three Pumas, three Alouette III/ Lama , six Mi-17 and one AB 205 were overhauled. In the same year refurbishment of Puma fleet was initiated. Moreover three Mi-17 were sent to Czeckoslovakia for overhauling.

Highest Recovery ever

On **31 January 2009** a formation of two Ecureil-B3 helicopters took off for a Search and Rescue (S&R) mission in Ibrahim Sector . The lead helicopter (Tail No 2804) was piloted by Major Sulman Al Faisal (captain of helicopter) and Captain Bahram Khan (co-pilot) while the number two helicopter (Tail No 2808) was piloted by Major Ahmad Anwar Baig and Major Muhammad Anjum Rafique (Co-Pilot). The mission involved dropping of a dog handler alongwith a sniffing dog at Sattar Base at an altitude of 18900 feet to locate missing soldiers ex 23 FF Regiment. All up weight and available power margin of helicopter was well within safe landing limits. While landing, pilot encountered white out conditions due to incorrect landing technique and fresh / loose snow, consequently, the helicopter crashed 30 feet short of helipad sustaining major damage. All occupants remained safe. The recovery of helicopter (Tail No 2804) was planned on 12, 13 March 2009 after the recovery team of 299 EME Battalion could not recover the major components and went back to Rawalpindi. This became the highest recovery in Pakistan and which took place at approximately 17,500 feet and is unique in its kind it recovered a total of 91 items including the complete engine. The team was dropped by two Ecureuils in two days with tools and oxygen to survive at 17,500 feet.

On 18 December 2010, a civil fuel tanker collided with Bell-412 at Manzai helipad area. Bell sustained major damages to its fuselage and landing gears. Manzai is not a regular helipad hence there was very limited space available. Bell was successfully recovered to 503 Aviation Base Workshop on 28 December by road involving approximately 635 km of distance.

On 29 August 2014, Bell-412 helicopter No 218 force landed in a river bed near Jandola due to engine quit just after taking off from Jandola helipad. Within no time, a recovery team

Maintenance in Field

Augusta 139

Bell 412 at Miranshah

Puma at Wanna

Jet Ranger

A damaged Cobra was successfully retrieved from operational area by a Mi-17

Flying and maintenance crew which retrieve the damaged Cobra

Cobra at Miranshah

Cobra maintenance in the operational area

Cobra being armed during operations

Mi-17

Mi-17 on flight line

Cobra at Wanna

comprising Captain Adil Saleem, N/Subedar Muhammad Ikram, Havildar Amjad and Havildar Tanveer was promptly dispatched from FOB Peshawar to Jandola. Detailed on-site inspection / troubleshooting was carried out .Since rectification necessitated replacement of faulty engine assembly . One serviceable engine assembly was dispatched from Multan via Mi-17 helicopter. Replacement of engine assembly was carried in the rough terrain / weather conditions under the hostile environment. After dedicated efforts of the recovery team, Bell was back on flying status on 4 September 2014.

Relief Operations

In October 2005 the Northern Areas of Pakistan were hit by a massive earthquake and Americans led the way in the biggest helicopter rescue relief operation in the history 'Operation Lifeline'[9].

On **24th July 2008** a commendable rescue mission was carried out for an Italian expedition at Nanga Parbat. From the sheer slope and heights of the killer mountain, three Italian climbers were rescued by Major Aamer Masood and Major Asif Hayat. Thus obtaining gratitude and appreciation from Italian government through Italian embassy and own formation as well.

On **27 July 2008**, an excellent and difficult casualty evacuation mission was carried out from Spontek peak for the rescue of an Austrian expedition. The foreigners were rescued successfully from an altitude of 19100 feet by the rescue team of Fearless Five in the leadership of Commanding Officer of the Squadron.

Evacuation of the dead body of Sepoy Nabi Amin Shaheed ex 27 Azad Kashmir Regiment from Ibrahim post on **9 September 2008**, through a sling operation was an uphill task. Despite extremely inhospitable terrain at the sector, coupled with deteriorating weather condition at the time of evacuation, the team lead by Commanding Officer of the Squadron, went well beyond the call of duty and made 12 attempts to establish hover in the close proximity of boulder at an altitude of 19000 feet AMSL and accomplished the mission successfully in the twelfth attempt.

Floods 2010

In the summer of 2010, Pakistan faced the calamity of floods,[10] On 22 July , the monsoon rains started and by first week of August it had become an emergency. Overall there were 1.6 million houses destroyed and over 14 million people were affected, approximately 1200-2000 people lost their lives in this flood. Sindh faced the major brunt of it. Army Aviation as usual were the first responder. The severity of emergency called for international relief work , thus UNO, USA and Chinese helicopters also arrived on the scene shortly. A coordination headquarters were established at Hyderabad , Multan Aviation Base was made responsible for overall coordination of all aviation efforts in the affected areas. 1x Alt-III ex Scorpions, 2 x Bell-412 (SPD), 2 x UH-2H (50 Squadron), 4 x MI-8 (UN), 4 x MI-17 (Chinese), 4 x CH-53 and 4 x CH-46 from USA. Similarly , the area around Multan was also badly affected . Total of 274,632 kg flood and relief goods were lifted and provided to flood stricken persons. Data of damages in 1280 villages was collected. Total 126 sorties were conducted during these operations. It is worth highlighting that corps composite squadrons like 7 squadron played important role in these relief operations by providing administrative support, safety pilots and liaison and reconnaissance. In 5 Corps area, and total of 10,961 tons of ration was collected and distributed, a total of 421,285 persons were evacuated and rescued.

9 Ibid,pp 400-412

10 Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Pakistan Floods of 2010." Encyclopedia Britannica, March 21, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/event/Pakistan-Floods-of-2010.

Army Aviators during Relief Operations

Woman gave birth to twins in a Mi 171 during flood relief in 2010

USA Flood relief team 2010

Chineses Flood relief team 2010

Gyari Operation 2012. In an event resulting from a natural calamity, a slide hit an infantry battalion headquarters in Gyari resulting in loss of 139 precious lives of our soldiers. 5 Squadron proved its metal once again and successfully undertook the rescue operation from April 2012 till February 2013, inspite of resource constraints and weather limitations

Earthquake 2013

On **24 September 2013**, a massive earthquake (7.8 magnitude) hit Balochistan , the epic center was 90 Kilometers north of Awaran district, similarly on 28 September the same area was again hit by an earth quake of 6.8 magnitude. At least 348 people lost their lives with over 21000 houses destroyed. Gallants were the first to respond. 'On 24 Sep 2013, when earthquake hit the gen area Khuzdar, Mashkai and Bela, 4 Army Aviation Squadron was the first military entity to reach the affected area. Initiated damage assessment and basis for subsequent relief efforts was provided by the squadron. 42 Pilots (MI-17 and Bell 412) took part in the relief operations. over 370 flying hours were flown in the relief operation.[11]

During the massive LDA building fire in Lahore on 9 May 2013, Hammerhead Squadron evacuated 19 x pers from the fire engulfed building

In **September 2014**, Pakistan witnessed yet another disastrous flood in AK area and Punjab. 2 x Mi-17 of 5 squadron provided tremendous sp in flood affected areas of Jhang, Multan, Muzaffar Garh and Shorkot. A total no. of 69.7 hrs were flown and 600 tons of relief goods were delivered in flood hit areas.

Anti-Locust Operation

In 2019-2020, Army Aviation took part in an Anti-Locust Operation in Sindh and Balochistan. 198 hours were flown in this national calamity. Plant Protection Department is responsible for this exercise and they have been performing an excellent job with their Beaver aircraft; in 2018 they lost their Beaver in an air crash thus the responsibility was handed over to Army Aviation. This operation was carried out under COVID environments. Major Kashif Bhatti (colonel) conducted the initial tests of installing the kits on the Jet Ranger helicopters; these spray kits were selected from the net and federal government procured it. Colonel Kashif Bhatti narrates , ' It was start of summer and after carrying out the tests on the spray machines we flew to Kashmore and made it as our base of operations. We had close coordination with the plant protection department, they gave us the map details, there workforce would place the red flags at the affected area indicating us the limits. Jet Ranger was completely sealed thus allowing no air from outside. Flying crew and the crew chief were issued with special dress. As a matter of fact the CGS had allowed the pilots to fly in civil clothing keeping in view the nature of job. Jet Ranger would fly in zigzag pattern over the infested area at low speed and height.' Army Aviation had spared three Jet Rangers and one Puma for this task.' One Jet Ranger was also placed at Turbat for anti-locust duty.

11 https://www.pdma.gob.pk/disaster-and-climities/earthquake-awaran-2013

A total of 75 sorties were flown consuming 196 hours. covering an area of 10856 hectares. Khuzdar, Kharan, Kashmore, Lehri, Dera Bugti, Pishin, Basima, Ziarat in Balochistan Province; Mojgarh, Feroza, Perowali, and Rahim yar Khan in Southern Punjab and Chor in Sindh were the araes which were sprayed. It is worth highlighting that these operations started in 2019 and affected fields were sparyed in 2019 and 2020 as well. In Balochinstan alone 112 sorties consuming 349 hours were carried out in year 2020.

Firefighting at Zhob- 2022. On 18th may 2022, fire broke out at the world's oldest juniper forest at Zhob and very next day two Mi-17 helicopters were carrying out fire fighting; this action is the highest ever conducted by army aviators. The field elevation of forest is well over 9000 feet and helicopters were flying at 9800 feet. Sazai Dam which is located at a distance of 14 flying minutes on Mi-17 was utilised to fill up the Bambi bucket. It would take another 22 minutes of flying before helicopters could pour out the water over the jungle fire, a Bambi bucket carries 8000-10000 litres of water. Balochistan government also ask for help from Iran and resultantly one fixed wing aircraft arrived on the scene , it has a capacity to fill up around 40,000 litres of water. However by the time it arrived the operation was almost over , yet one is grateful to Iran for this timely help.

Flood 2022.

Floods are now a new normal in Pakistan due to weather changing pattern, mostly they are abrupt and doesnot give enough time, In the summer of 2022, northern areas were affected. King Birds took part in the Pattan- Dassu area where Lieutenant Colonel Zeeshan, Major Rashid, Major Jamal and Major Irtaza flew 30 hours between 22 August-2 September 2022. Same squadron also took part in flood relief operations in lower Sindh where Major Taimur Qasim and Major Mustafa Ahmed along with Major Sadi Ahmed and Captain Naseeb Ullah flew 38 hours between 30 August - 6 September 2022. In the same week, crew of King Birds including Major Zeeshan, Major Usman,Major Minhaj and Major Rashid flew 58 hours in the area between Kanju- Kalam . (30 August -13 September 2022). Last but not the least , crew of King Birds were also active between Hyderabad – Dadu , Major Mustafa and Major Saad flew 35 hours. This highlights the deployment and efforts of one squadron only. It highlights that the Squadron was deployed from Dassu in north to Dadu in south. All in all,King Birds flew 162 hours, heli evacuated 1600 persons and transported relief goods weighing 110250 Kilograms.

Pakistan Army Aviation as United Nations Peacekeepers. 2000-2025

Sierra Leone-UNAMSL

During year 2000 Pakistan Army contingent was to participate in UN mission Congo where Army Aviation was to field a Cargo Squadron. Participation of Pakistan Contingent did not materialize and part of the unit remained standby at Rawalpindi for approximately one year. Officers and other ranks, who were attached from other stations to Rawalpindi, were reverted back. It was in this background when UN requested aviation support in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone is located in the West Africa with 40 % of population being Muslim. English is the official language and Krio is the local dialect. Decade of civil war and tribal feuds have left over 50,000 people dead and over a million displaced along with arson ,looting, rape, and murder. The United Nations decided to field a strong 17,000 peace keeping force, largest in its history for restoration of peace known as United Nation Assistance Mission Sierra Leone (UNAMSL)

During April/May2001, the plan to induct a substantial number of Pakistani troops in UNAMSL provided a changed operational dimensions to Pakistan Aviation Unit. The unit was then re-organized to hold three Cobras, Jet Rangers and Puma helicopters each. A total of 37 officers from Army Aviation were therefore selected under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Mahmood with Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Sardar as 2nd in Command. PAF provided ground support in the form of air traffic control, meteorological and fire fighting teams.

Reconnaissance and Layout Group (RLG)of Pakistan Contingent (PAKCON) moved to the mission area on 5th June 2001. Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Sardar , Major Shahzad Manzoor and Captain Syed Muhammad Ali were nominated from Army Aviation. They collected maps, charts and carried out liaison with Civil Aviation at Sierra Leone

Departure to Mission Area

Major portion of the unit was to depart on 5th of August 2001,when a telephone call from Military Operation Directorate on 3rd August, after working hours changed the entire scenario. “No Jet Rangers/Cobra pilots or technical staff was to board this flight”. Only Puma pilots, other Rank were cleared to depart later Jet Rangers were also given green signal.On 5th August, the Puma flight of Pakistan Aviation unit boarded Kras Air and landed at Lungi Airport on 6th August. The strength comprised as under :-

a.	Officers	6
b.	EME Persons	36
c.	Aviation Persons	36
d.	Total	78

Loading Of Helicopters

On 23rd August 2001 giant Antonov-124 landed at Chaklala International Airport to transport the choppers and vital ground support equipment (GSE) to Sierra Leone. All the Puma helicopters were flown on 23rd August evening to Chaklala Airport and parked outside the pens of PAF Base. Removal of rotor heads started on the one side and rain on the other.The last head was in position with the sound of the Fajar prayers. A few hours rest and then the Jet Rangers flew in. Their Loading started at midday and finished at mid night 24/25 August 2001. On 26th August 2001 Antonov (AN-124) landed at Lungi International. Lieutenant Colonel Shahid with his team was already present to receive the helicopters. Unloading of helicopters and assembling was carried out smoothly. On 26th August 2001, the commanding officer and technical officers landed just in time to air test the Jet Ranger helicopters before these could make their virgin flight across Atlantic Ocean for Hasting Airfield. One helicopter (UN-106) had a transmission oil leakage and thus had to be airlifted by MI-26 helicopter next day.On 28th August 2001 the main body was airlifted to Hastings by MI-26 helicopters. The aircraft were parked in the hangar located at Hastings Airfield.Later on this hanger was named as "Friendship Hanger". The manpower was accommodated in UN Transit Camp Hasting, which was to remain permanent camp of aviators for quite some time.

During the next two days Puma fleet was made fully operational and started flying area familiarization mission. Puma flew 15 hours in 2 days. Jet Rangers became operational from 1st September 2001 .Pakistani Sector (Sector-5) was still in the process of eastward deployment. Numerous reconnaissance missions were carried out by the Sector Commander Brigadier Ahmed Shuja Pasha and his team to Kailahun and Pendembu areas. These areas were the hub of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) . Our Pumas and Jet Rangers remained the main source of conveyance in this operation. 25th October 2001,was a sad day for PAK BATT-II, as Sepoy Tariq fell down from a stationery vehicle and got head injury in Yengema**,** He was evacuated to level-III Choitram Hospital in Freetown but after remaining in Coma for 8 days he expired.

UN 103{Ukranian MI-8 crashed into the sea}

On 7th November at 2000 hours one Ukrainian MI-8 helicopter UN-103 from Mammy Yoko to Lungi was declared over due. Though the flight time was only 8 minutes .The Search and Rescue operation was launched which continued throughout the night with another Ukrainian MI-8, along with power boats and deep sea divers. The helicopter had crashed 2 minutes after take off, probably due to disorientation in the pitch dark night.Only two bodies out of seven including the crew were recovered after two days. The wreckage was recovered after 13 days from a depth of 175 meters almost 5000 meters off the coast of Cape Sierra.

Deployment At Yengema

Yengema is a small town of Kono. (a diamond rich district of Sierra Leone). It is located 137 Nautical Miles east of Freetown{capital of Sierra Leonne} and only 17 Nautical Miles

West of Koidu (Headquarters Sector 5). The Airfield has 3000 feet long unserviceable runway having direction 15/33.

Initially it was planned that AH-1F and Jet ranger helicopters will be proceeding to serve under UNO. On 4th May 2001, Major Zahid and Captain Ali briefed UN officials regarding capabilities of Cobra helicopter, AH-1F no 786-20 was shown to the officials , similarly captain Mujtaba who had flown JR no 3927, to Rawalpindi from Multan briefed these officials. Pakistan Aviation Squadron was raised in which three Cobras and three Jet rangers were proposed, however it was decided by UN officials that Cobra gunships are not required thus only Jet rangers were flown and crew earmarked for Cobras were also inducted into it. Captain Ahmed Mujtaba Azhar, Captain Sajid Sattar, Major Asad Hafeez, Captain Mansoor Fazal and Captain Raja Muhammad Munir , Captain Muhammad Ali were among the pioneer pilots selected from Air Wolves. Captain Nadeem Yousef and Captain Rizwan Mahmud were the other pilots who proceeded to Sierra Leone. In August 2002, induction of pilots from the combat group was halted due to operational requirement although pilots from other machines were rotated. Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Mahmood (later brigadier, commanded combat group) was the commander of Pakistan Aviation Squadron, overall Brigadier Shuja Pasha was the mission commander. Brigadier Rizwan recalls 'an advance party had gone earlier and we moved there later. It was conveyed that the mission commander (Brigadier Pasha) is very strict regarding the discipline, thus we shaved inside aircraft lavatory before landing'. Sierra Leone airport is on an island, own aviation squadron was established at Hastings camp, which was on the one side of the airport. Tin roof huts, wooden barracks were raised, and five to six officers had to share one barrack, weather was tropical, main threat was from the Lasa Fever. It is the worst kind of malaria and death rate was very high, a person dying from Lasa fever was buried almost twenty-six feet deep in earth as a precaution. Troops and officers had to take Fensimef tablets to counter the fever; hallucination was the major side effect of this medicine. Later own squadron shifted to another camp which was a swamp known as Monyyaho, UN headquarters were also located here. The missions for Jet rangers were mainly casualty evacuation, liaison and communication or pay drop. Flying was single pilot; a typical pay would be around half a million US $ and had to be delivered across the country. In one such mission , Captain Rizwan Mahmud flew over four hours, it was not the distance but the winds were so strong that he had to fly for endurance; as the refuelling points were very few. Jet Rangers were painted white with UN marking, they were transported in AN-124 transport aircraft; these helicopters were transported back to Pakistan in 2006

Camp Life

Life in the camp had its own flair. There were good times and there were down hills as well. On 12th April 2002 Lieutenant Colonels Khalid and Shahid got the good news that they both have been promoted to the rank of Colonels{they both are brigadiers now}.The traditional promotion party was celebrated at night over Bar-B-Q.There was physical training in the morning, the weather was tropical with plenty of rain. Living barracks were tin roofed, after PT there was time for shower and then the morning brief would be conducted. Flying

was as per requirement .The camp was protected by the barbed wire thus there was a world inside. Food stuff was in abundance,so much that Aviation unit used to gift the surplus to the locals. There would be occasional cricket matches with the other Pakistani officers, loser had to pay for the Bar B-Q. According to Captain Tassawar" We would fly to the remote jungles. The natives are as they are depicted in movies, women are bare chested and men carry the long lancers. Football is like a religion to these people. On week ends we would go the Freetown. Most of the well to do families are Indian origin, there are flashy cars and modern shops as well.There are night clubs and bars in the city."

Eid Ul Azha was celebrated with the same zeal and enthusiasm. Quarter Master Major Rizwan arranged Bara Khana during daytime. In the evening a Eid Milan party was organized by Major Qaiser Zahoor for all Pakistani staff officers, and Provost Company. Keeping in view the easy access to the majority of the invitees, Goderich was selected as the venue.The 2nd day of Eid was celebrated moré traditionally when Subedar K.B Baloch bought a goat for Major Hamid. To give a real traditional/spiritual touch to the Eid festival, the Jet Ranger Flight Commander on his and on behalf of his flight did Qurbani. Every one especially Haji Sahib enjoyed this Qurbani ka Ghosht.

After every twelve months the change over of officers and troops took place. Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Jan Khattak was the next commanding officer, he suffered an 'internet virus'. Captain Gull was repatriated back to Pakistan on medical grounds which later took the shape of a court of inquiry and finally officer was given the letter of thanks. Major General Azam General Officer Commanding Army Aviation along with Major Shahid Latif visited the aviation unit in 2003.

Lieutenant Colonel Zia ud Din took over the command from Khattak. He narrated "Command is more comprehensive, there are no short cuts and no compulsions, we get all what we required from UN. Interestingly every soldier is given five condoms per week and in one month Pakistani contingent alone drew 75,500 of these items". On 30th June 2004 , one MI-8 helicopter of UNO crashed in Sierra Leone due to jungle thicket killing twenty four peacekeepers on board including fourteen Pakistanis. It included Colonel Zia as well who was commanding the Pakistan Aviation Squadron at Sierra Leone. Colonel Zia was recently promoted and had yet to put on the ranks and was due to rejoin Pakistan after his tenure of duty. He took active part in Siachin Conflict and was awarded Tamgha Basalat and Imtiazi Sanad. He commanded 21 Army Aviation Squadron. He was an Instructor Pilot and was universally respected for his demeanour and professionalism.

Burundi

Burundi is small country in Central Africa.It became independent in 1962.The civil war between Hutu and Tutsi tribes dates back to 14th century. Since 1993 over 1,50,000 people have died due to this conflict.In early part of 2004 UN requested Pakistan for assistance in peace keeping. Pakistan Army Aviation was required to furbish a squadron strength .By July all officers and other ranks were selected for this mission and concentrated at Rawalpindi.

Puma

Pakistan Contingent

Mi-17

Puma

In the last week of July 2004 the advance party consisting of Lieutenant Colonel Asim and eight other ranks arrived at Bujumbura the capital of Burundi. On 9th September 2004 the Army Aviation contingent led by Colonel Pervaiz Butt landed at Burundi. In November 2004 Majors Aamir Saeed and Basharat Noor were the first one to avail the leave and they narrated'We left Pakistan via Karachi on a Askari Aviation chartered flight along with elements of 35 Azad Kashmir Regiment,Engineers and few Doctors. Initially we stayed for ten days at UN transit camp and with the help of engineers made our camp. Our camp is located few miles north east of Bujumbura Airport.It is a jungle where we live in tents however we have made cemented helipads for our MI-17 helicopters. We are total 100 persons including 14 pilots. Our daily routine starts with physical training and than routine work till 1300 hours with games in the evening. Almost daily it rains there.

Sudan

Mali.

Mali is bordered by Algeria in north, Niger in east, Burkina Faso and Cote D Ivore in south, Guinea in south west and Senegal alongwith Mauritania in west. It has a population of 16 million and majority of them lives in south. Bamako is the capital and French apart from Bambara are the spoken languages. Mali is 90% Muslim majority population. Mali was colonized by France in 1898 and got its freedom in 1960.

Central African Republic (CAR)

UN Peacekeeping mission was established in 2014 and very first Pakistan Aviation Unit (PAU) was raised next year. Bangi is the capital and UNO field office is established within the capital, however the PAU were stationed in the close proximity of the airport.

Lt Col Asim narrates, I was in the PAU- 6, it was time of Covid-19 and as such our routine was adjusted according to the needs of the time, we flew with the safety dress that includes mask and gloves apart from protective wear. Under normal conditions we used to fly with 24 passengers in a Mi-17 helicopter however under Covid environments it was reduced to 16 passengers in order to allow distance between the sitting passengers.He further highlighted , helicopters changeover by itself is an interesting experience and exercise, usually after two years the helicopters completes its flying hours and is due for overhauling etc thus they have to be replaced at CAR. The UNO arranges an Antonov 124 aircraft which arrives at Nur Khan airbase, our two helicopters are disassembled thus taking off their rotors. The flight itself spans over 22 hours with a six hours break. At Bangui the helicopters are off loaded and reassembled by our own crew. In an another interesting feature, he highlighted that while coming back from mission, myself and one other officer had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonels and our commanding officer Lt Col Adeel Toor (brigadier at present) put the new ranks on our shoulders mid air, all the passengers were from Pakistan Army.

Army Aviation School 2000-2025

Army Aviation School remains the sole institution that trains the newly inducted officers into pilots through its pilot courses and their further grooming through mid career courses, it also trains rotary pilots as instructor pilots. In last quarter of century the most significant step has been the establishment of simulator training institute alongwith induction of new training helicopter Enstrom 280 FX

The first major step was undertaken in 2003. The pressing issue was the shortage of rotary pilots. In 1977 when Pumas were inducted and again in 1993 when Mi-17 were inducted; special rotary flying courses were initiated in Army Aviation School , similar course was adopted and young officers were after initial training on fixed wing aircraft were directly converted onto rotary wing and posted to rotary squadrons. Pilot Course 44 was the first such course which was bifurcated into the rotary conversion. Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Usman Awan narrates that, we were to leave for our cross country navigation, we had already flown around 100 hours. Our maps were marked for the next day navigation when at around mid day we were informed about this conversion. Flight Commander wrote names of all studenst on a chit and then picked up six chits, my name aws among them. We were informed regarding our future course , naturally we all were very dejected , my instructor Capatin Manzoor 9brigadier retd) not only consoled me but also raised my morale by highlighting the bright future ahead. Captain Usman was later posted to 27 Squadron after completing 75 hours on TH-300 and Mi-17. Later he served in all the five squadrons having Mi-17 which includes VVIP Squadron as well. This one example highlights how important that transition was.

P & R Courses

Pilot and Rotary courses thus were run parallel to each other, in 2006 the R Courses were terminated , however in 2011 they were again restarted and are continuing till todate. There has been an opposition to the R Courses from the old hands purely on the grounds that these pilots lacks enough experience and aviation maturity as compared to the pilots who follows traditional path of first serving in composite squadrons , piling up hours and then converting onto the rotary wing. The data does not support this view point as by 2025, it is quite obvious that there is not much of difference in term sof aviation maturity between these two courses.

Traditionally aviation school conducts only one P Course in a calendar year, however from 2020 , two P courses are being conducted each year. Thus P-61 Course graduated on 18th September 2020 whereas P-62 Course with an intake of 35 Student Pilots commenced on 10th August 2020. Another step which was introduced in 2017 was the flying aptitude test to be conducted through computer. Volounteers of P-58 underwent this test conducted by Dr Faisal Naveed Asif at Aviation school (17-22 January 2017).

Rotary Training at USA-2010

In 2010, Pakistan Army Aviation selected sixteen officers to undergo basic rotary training in USA known as Initial Entry Rotary Course (IERC), these officers proceeded in three batches. In the first batch were three officers and within a fortnight another batch of five officers joined them at Fort Rucker. The selected officers were all fixed wing pilot with no rotary flying experience, few of them had instructor rating on fixed wing single engine. Major Harris Hussain was one such officer, he is presently performing as GSO-II in Headquarters Combat Group. He narrates, 'we flew to Washington Dulles airport, from there we took a connecting flight to Atlanta and then another flight which took us to Doughton a small airfield close to Fort Rucker. American Army Centre of Flying excellence is located in Fort Rucker, we were housed in a single occupancy suite. The pattern was that every fifteen day a course was being conducted thus our course serial was 10/18, thus the eighteenth course of year 2018. Three officers had reported earlier and were part of serial 17, later in flying phase we were united. In the first phase, after preliminary area orientation, form filling and medical examination, we had to undergo four weeks ground studies. The day would start very early and last till evening with an hour break for lunch. In the academic phase, instructors were all well prepared and had all the teaching aids. Every alternate day we had quiz tests and after the ground schooling our flying phase started. Flying phase was in fact teaching and making us as Aero Scouts. In the first phase, the day would start very early, as the bus for school would depart at 0445 hours, an hour of preflight and an hour of meteorological briefing. During Met/ ATC, emergencies were asked and any one failing was punished to spend an hour or two in the library after pack up. In the library, you cannot sleep as the librarian an old man would simply deduct the time one has slept and later it will be carried forward. At times, the whole class had to spent hours in library as punishment on weekend.' Major Awais highlights that, 'an orange dot was also placed on our wrist watch, aim was to be aware of the fact that life is more important than rushing things we were given a small bag as well to pick up any foreign flying object (FOD), placed it at the given place, in return the same bag was returned to the individual with small souvenir inside'. The grading was strict, A grade was between 90-100%, B ranged from 80% and above and C grade was for marks above 70%; there were no grades below 70%..

The flying phase comprised of three distinct stages, in the first stage, students had to fly 40 hours on Visual Flying Model of Jet Ranger, in next phase instrument flying of thirty odd hours and finally forty hours of night flying including night vision goggles (NVG) landings and tactical flying. There was no solo flying, grade slips were in terms of A, B or C grades and were given daily. Every morning the instructor would take two students each and proceed to staging fields, approximately eight-ten nautical miles of main air field (Fort Rucker). At staging field, he would drop one student and carryout flying with other and then changeover. Flying lessons were the same as in Pakistan, effects of control and so on, one major difference was the practices given in auto rotations; every student carried almost 200 such manoeuvre in his course. There was no concept of power recovery, student had to land with power off. There was twenty days break for Christmas and New Year, students were allowed to bring their families too. Mission preparation and map marking was very elaborate and would consume almost two-three hours.

At the end, a graduation ceremony was held, Major Harris was given an honorary diploma in flying for securing highest grades in flying, in fact his grades were the highest since 2007 secured by any student including Americans, another Pakistani pilot Major Awais was awarded honorary diploma for securing highest marks in academics. Overall, all Pakistani students secured good grades.

Lieutenant Colonel Imran Butt also attended this course as captain and he mentions that one of the major difference between own teaching and American way of flying was in the aspect that Americans would teach shutting off the fuel valves in air during an emergency landing whereas own teaching emphasised on doing the same after landing.

Another course in America which Cobra pilots attended was Aviation Captain training course, similar to our mid-career course, it was a yearlong course in which tactical aspects of aviation such as planning, and handling of aviation assets were taught.

Induction of Enstrom FX 280

The very first dedicated rotary trainer inducted in Army Aviation was TH-300 C which joins the flight line in 1994. In 2015-2016 under Operation Hummingbird, ten TH-300C were refurbished at 503 Aviation Base Workshop. In the first phase five TH-300 C were refurbished by the manufacturer in which technical training of own technicians was also imparted. The remainng five helicopters were later refurbished by the 503 base Workshop and duly certified by the manufacturer. The total cost of the project was US $ 3.23 Millions.

In 2014, paper evaluation for new trainer was initiated and Enstrom FX 280 figured out as the most appropriate helicopter. GOC Army Aviation Major General Khalil Dar visited USA and inspected the facilities of Enstrom and found them satisfactory to own requirements. later the trials of FX 280 were carried out at Army Aviation School. The helicopter itself was formally inducted in 2016.

Induction Ceremony of Enstorm 300

Col Naeem *Col Khawar* *Brig Javed* *Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar* *Maj Gen Anjum Anayat* *Brig Asif* *Maj Gen Najeeb* *Brig Nadeem* *Col Ahsan*

Sitting L to R: Maj Naveed, Maj Iftikhar, Lt Col Yaseen (CFIRW), Col Rashid (CI Flying), Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah HI (M) GOC Avn (Chief Guest), Lt Gen Nadeem Taj HI (M) (Comd 30 Corps), Capt Uzair (Course Sen), Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood Hi(M)(Dg Avn), Col Syed Muhammad Mazhar TI (M) (Dy Comd), Lt Col Zahem, Maj Asad, Maj Amir.

Standing 1st L to R: Lt Owais, Capt Hamed, Lt Waqar, Majasif, Maj Tariq, Maj Talal, Capt Omar, Capt Umar, Maj Haris, Maj Babar, Maj Meraj, Capt Shahid, Majharoon, Capt Kalim, Capt Adnan.

Standing 2nd L to R: Lt Sibtain, Capt Saleh, Lt Kamal, Lt Humayun, Capt Omer, Capt Asad, Capt Mohsin, Capt Atif, Lt Imran, Lt Bilal, Captinayat,. Lt Kamran, Lt Rashid. Lt Tanzeel. captall Capt Jameel, Ltarsalan (Pak Navy).

Sitting L to R:- Lt Col Nadeem, Lt Col Adiol, Lt Col Mustafa (CFI FW), Col Wasiq(Dy Comd), Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah(Goc Avn), Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmed (Comd 1 Corps), Capt Imran (Course Senior), Brig Sadaqat(Comd), Col Rashid(Ci Flying), Maj Haroon, Maj Naveed,

Standing L to R:- (1st Row) Lt Waqar, Capt Aftab, Maj Rehan, Maj Haris, Maj Omar, Maj Tariq, Maj Farhan, Capt Jahangir, Capt Anan Capt Faisal, Maj Asif, Capt Fakhar

Standing L to R:- (2nd Row) Lt Shayar, Lt Mehmmod, Capt Shahrukh, Lt Yasir, Capt Irfan, Capt Zahid, Lt Sadiq, Capt Zahoor, Capt Imran Capt Tariq, Capt Hammad, Capt Naeem, Capt Waqas, Capt Nauman

Standing L to R:- (3rd Row) Capt Sajid, Capt Daud, Capt Faisal, Lt Usama, Lt Azhan, Capt Ali, Capt Salman, Capt Qazi, Capt Atif, Capt

Sitting L to R: Maj Zafar, Lt Col Kayani, Col Irfan (CI Flying), Maj Gen Nasser Khan Janjua Hi (M) Vcgs(B), Maj Gen Taqi Naseer Razvi (Dg Avn), Lt Gen Rahil Sharif (Corps Comd), Lt Gen Waheed Rashad Hi (M)Tbt (Chief Guest), Capt Mazhar (Course Snr), Maj Gen Raja Mohammad Arif Nazir Hi(M)(Goc Avn), Brig Sadaqat Ali Khan (Comdt). Col Wasiq Khalil Mehmood (Dy Comdt), Lt Col Mustaf Rais (Cfi Fw), Maj Haroon.

Standing 1st L to R: Maj Faisal, Maj Salman, Maj Jamal, Maj Naveed, Capt Arif, Capt Faisal, Capt Bilal, Capt Zaman, Capt Tariq, Maj Taimur, Maj Asif, Maj Waheed, Maj Jehangir, Maj Farhan.

Standing 2nd L to R: Capt Saad, Lt Shakeel, Capt Ateeq, Lt Shahbaz, Capt Zeeshan, Capt Irtiza, Lt Ahmed, Capt Qasim, Capt Mohsin, Capt Usman, Lt Iftikhar, Lt Nawaz, Lt Khalid, Lt Sher, Capt Zahoor, Captatif, Lt Ali.

Standing 3rd L to R: Capt Rehman, Capt Awais, Capt Abid, Capt Zubair, Capt Mudassir, Capt Sohaib, Capt Jamal, Capt Hannad, Lt Umair, Capt Masood, Capt Asif, Capt Zia, Capt Shay Mureed, Capt Siddque.

Sitting L to R: Maj Salman, Maj Zaryab, Lt Col Jehangir(R), Lt Col Rizwan Afzal(Cfi Fw), Col Nadeem Kiyani (Ci Fyling), Brig Dilawar Shah (Comd), Chief of Army Staff Gen Ishfaq Perwaiz Kiyani NI (M) HI, Capt Ammar Rizwan (Course Sen), Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood (Goc Avn), Col Qaiser Zahoor (Dy Comd), Lt Col Hilal Rashid (Flt Comd FW), Lt Col Kashif, Maj Taimur.

Standing L to R: Majm Zubair, Maj Naveed, Maj Waheed, Maj Jamal, Maj Ali, Maj Jehangir, Maj Omer, Capt Ahmad Sadir, Capt Azhar, Lt Raja Zeeshan,

(1st) Row: Capt M Hashim, Maj Kalim, Capt Omer, Capt Imran.

(2nd) Row:

Standing L to R: Capt Abdar Rehman, Lt Sayed Ali, Capt Safdar Abbas (Tbt), Capt Qatim, Lt M Nayyar, Lt M Ejaz, Lt Malik Amir, Capt Junaid, Capt Atif Javed, Capt M Zohaib, Capt M Farrukh, Lt Yasir Habib, Lt Talal Sarwar Lt M Raahim, Capt Shan-E-Ali, Lt M Usman Kahlid,Lt Shair Asfand.

Standing L to R: Capt M Mubeen, Lt Sajid, Capt Husnain, Capt Kamran, Capt M Haroon, Capt Amer, Capt Rehan, Capt Yasir, Capt Shujjad Ali, Capt Khoda Baksh

(3rd) Row: Lt Uzair, Lt Mustafa, Capt Akmal, Capt Zaigham.

Sitting L to R:-	Maj Jahangir, Maj Jalal, Lt Col Jahangir(R), Lt Col Kashir, Lt Col Rizwan (CFI FW), Brig Nasir(Comd),\ Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood(Goc Avn), Capt Basit (Course Senior), Col Qaiser(Dy Comd), Lt Col Hilal(Cfi Fw), Majfaisal, Maj Waheed, Maj Zubair
Standing L to R:- (1st Row)	Lt Nauman, Capt Saqib, Maj Ali, Maj Omar, Maj Mohsin, Capt Ali, Lt Bilal, Maj Omer, Capt Daud, Capt Naeem, Capt Kashif, Lt Abid
Standing L to R:- (2nd Row)	Capt Talha, Capt Basit, Capt Rana Abbas, Lt Gulam Murtaza, Capt Kahlid, Capt Toqueer, Capt Usman Sayed, Capt Hassan Mateen, Capt Adnan, Capt Hussnain, Lt Fakhar, Capt Shahzad
Standing L to R:- (3rd Row)	Capt Barkat, Capt Sayed Umair Ali, Capt Aiaz, Capt Abbas, Lt Kashif, Capt Masser Abbas, Lt Mushtaq, Capt Hussain, Capt Imtiaz, Capt Zafar, Capt Arslan, Capt Hassan, Capt Shafiq

Sitting L to R:-	Maj Imran, Lt Col Jahangir(R), Lt Col Zafar (CFI FW), Col Javed (Ci Flying), Col Qaiser (Dy Comd), Vrig Asif (Comd), Maj Gen Ikram Ul Haq(Vcgs (B), Capt Sofian (Course Senior), Maj Gen Anjum (Goc Avn), Col Daud, Lt Col Raza, Maj Aleem, Maj Omer,
Standing L to R:-	Maj Bilal, Maj Shahbaz, Maj Mudasir, Maj Awais, Maj Atif, Maj Naeem, Capt Suleman, Capt Mohsin, Capt Kamran
(1st Row)	Capt Zubair, Lt Mohsin, Capt Atif, Capt Shahbaz, Maj Waqar, Maj Daud,
Standing L to R:-	Capt Zaheer, Capt Rana Suleman, Capt Suban, Capt Hameed, Capt Mirza Ahemd, Capt Shaheryar, Capt Ahmed,
(2nd Row)	Lt Usama, Capt Riaz, Capt Arshad,
	Capt Fahad, Capt Usman, Capt Sayed Usman, Capt Sattar
Standing L to R:-	Capt Kashif, Capt Farhan, Capt Hassan, Capt Shahnam, Capt Waqas, Capt Sharjeel, Capt Asim,
(3rd Row)	Capt Hassan Cheema, Capt Навів, Capt Zeeshan, Capt Hashir, Capt Faisal, Lt Mehmood,

Sitting L to R:- Maj Hammad, Maj Kuhda Baksh, Lt Col Raza, Lt Col Afaq, Col Naeem(Dy Comd), Brig Nasir Saleem(Comdt), Maj Gen Isfaq Nadeem (Vcgs B), Capt Hassan (Course Senior), Maj Gen Kahlil Darr(Goc Avn), Col Javed (Ci Flying) Lt Col Zafar (CFI FW), Lt Col Jahangir(R), Maj Zeeshan,

Sitting L to R:- (1st Row) Capt Sufyan, Capt Farrahk, Capt Shahbaz, Maj Hashim, Capt Naveed, Maj Farruhk, Capt Asif, Capt Omer, Lt Wali

Sitting L to R:- (2nd Row) Capt Faheem, Capt Atif, Capt Saeed, Capt Yasir, Capt Hayyat, Capt Arslan, Capt Sarosh, Capt Sanaullah, Lt Sami, Capt Tayyab, Capt Jamal,

Sitting L to R:- (3rd Row) Lt Muhammad, Capt Usman, Capt Istiaq, Capt Javed, Capt Ali Yaqob, Capt Sohail, Capt Hassan Javed, Capt Yasir Capt Bilal, Capt Saeed

Sitting L to R:- Maj Hannad, Maj Ammar, Lt Col (R) Jehanger, Lt Col Zafar (CFI FW), Col Naeem (Dy Comd), Bri Nasir Saleem Akhtar (Comd), COAS Gen Raheel Shareef Hi(M), Capt Hammad (Course Snr), Maj Gen Muhmmad Kahlil Darr(Goc Avn), Col Raja Muhammad Munir(Ci Flying), Lt Col Zahid, Maj Sohaib, Maj Hashim.

Standing L to R:- (1st Row) Lt Asim, Lt Ahmed, Lt Fahad, Maj Shan-E-Ali, Maj Zeeshan, Maj Faisal, Capt Usman, Capt Asad, Capt Hassan, Capt Shahnam, Maj Khoda Bakhsh, Capt Farhan, Maj Sajid, Maj Umar, Capt Talha, Capt Abdul Wali, Lt Umer.

Standing L to R:- (2nd Row) Lt Talha, Lt Nowsherwan, Lt Aftab, Lt Adil, Lt Kashif, Lt Arslan, Capt Maaz, Capt Ehtisham, Lt Khubaib, Capt Fahad Ali, Capt Umair, Capt Saqib, Capt Ali, Capt Shahzad, Capt Faisal.

Standing L to R:- (3rd Row) Capt Ameer, Capt Javed, Lt Sadi, Lt Adeel, Capt Hussain, Lt Abrar, Capt Shujat, Capt Usman, Capt Umer, Capt Mubashar, Capt Manzor, Lt Kahlid, Capt Asim

Sitting L to R:- Maj Kuhda Baksh, Maj Subhan, Lt Col Sohail (Cfi Fw), Col Ayoub(Ci Tac), Col Naeem(Dy Comd), Maj Kahlil Dar(Goc Avn), Lt Gen Ikram Ul Haq(Comd 30 Corps), Capt Irfan (Course Senior), Brig Nasir(Comd), Col Khawar(Ci Flying), Lt Col Naveed, Lt Col Jahangir(R), Maj Aamar

Standing L to R:- Capt Hassan, Maj Shanam, Maj Faisal, Maj Shane Ali, Capt Usman, Maj Sajjid, Maj Mohsin, Maj Ayaz, Maj Farhan, (1st Row) Maj Umair, Maj Mohsin, Capt Zeeshan, Maj Hassan, Maj Talha, Maj Usman, Capt Kashif, Maj Asad,

Standing L to R:- (2nd Row) Lt Usman Zafar, Capt Abbas, Capt Baqir, Capt Ali, Capt Zeeshan, Lt Zeeshan Javed, Capt Mehtab, Capt Affan, Capt Numan, Lt Muneeb, Capt Rashid, Capt Hassan, Capt Mehdi, Capt Shafaat,

Standing L to R:- (3rd Row) Capt Ahmed Zafar, Lt Waleed, Capt Munir, Capt Rafaqat, Capt Hayyat, Capt Asad Khan, Lt Muneeb, Lt Numan, Capt Arslan, Capt Ayaz, Capt Fahad, Capt Yousaf, Capt Wajahat,

Sitting L to R:- Maj Shanam, Maj Asad, Maj Saqib, Maj Sohaib, Lt Col Miraj (Cfi Fw), Col Khawar(Ci Flying), Brig Javed(Comd), Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar (Goc Avn), Lt Gen Ikram Ul Haq(Comd 30 Corps), Capt Irfan (Course Sebior), Col Rizwan(Dy Comd), Col Ayoub(Ci Tac), Lt Col Naveed, Lt Col Jahangir(R), Maj Shane Ali, Maj Ayaz, Maj Usman,

Standing L to R:- (1st Row) Maj Hassan, Maj Hassan Chema, Maj Waqas, Maj Fahkar, Maj Kashif, Maj Usman, Capt Ehtisham, Maj Mohsin, Capt Shujat, Maj Nawaz, Maj Farhan, Maj Soban, Maj Usman, Maj Zeeshan, Maj Suleman, Maj Mohsin, Maj Faisal, Capt Gul, Capt Shahzad, Capt Faisal, Maj Kashif

Standing L to R:- (2nd Row) Capt Hammad, Capt Hammad Ali, Capt Arslan Javed, Lt Hamza, Lt Shahzeb Raza, Capt Shakeel, Capt Meesum, Capt Waqar, Capt Faisal, Capt Shahbaz, Capt Tauqeer, Capt Changaiz, Capt Owais, Capt Usman, Capt Adnan, Lt Amad, Capt Khurram, Capt Sayed Adnan, Maj Hassan, Capt Wali,

Standing L to R:- Capt Moazzam, Capt Haris, Capt Jahangir, Capt Fahad, Capt Aman, Capt Fahim, Capt Nashiz, Capt Junaid, (3rd Row) Lt Fahim, Capt Wajahat, Capt Waleed, Capt Syed Abbas, Capt Taimoor, Capt Ahmed Khan, Lt Ammar, Capt Capt Abbas Muneer, Capt Fahad Shakeel, Capt Burhan

Sitting L to R:- Maj Nawaz, Maj Hassan, Maj Cheema, Lt Col Tariq, Lt Col Meeraj (Cfi Fw), Col Rizwan(Dy Comd), Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar(Goc Avn), Lt Gen Aamir (30 Corps Comd), Capt Hammad (Course Senior), Brig Asif(Comd), Col Kahwar(Ci Flying), Lt Col Jahangir(R), Maj Waqas, Maj Faisal, Maj Faruhk,

(1st Row)

Standing L to R:- Capt Wali, Maj Omar, Maj Gul, Maj Ali Haider, Maj Usman, Capt Fahad, Capt Ahmed, Maj Shujat, Maj Ehtisham, Capt Kashif, Capt Aftab, Maj Hassan, Capt Sadi, Capt Hamza,

(2nd Row)

Standing L to R:- Capt Umar, Capt Ali Irtza, Capt Raja Shahan, Lt Farkhad, Capt Ubaid, Lt Iqbal, Capt Atif, Capt Basit, Lt Abdul Basit, Capt Fayyaz, Capt Shayan, Capt Tajammal, Lt Sarmad, Capt Minhas, Capt Shadman,

(3rd Row)

Standing L to R:- Capt Taimoor, Capt Shahzad, Capt Faique, Lt Shoaib, Capt Nauman, Capt Wajeeh Ul Hassan, Lt Zulkarnain, Capt Hurram, Capt Hussnain, Capt Ibrar, Lt Nabi, Capt Khawar, Capt Qasim, Capt Ashar, Capt Agha Fateh

Sitting L to R:- Maj Shahzad, Maj Kashif, Maj Hassan, Maj Saqib, Lt Suleman(Cfi Fw), Col Saeed(Dy Comd), Maj Gen Najeeb(Goc Avn) Maj Gen Nasir (Dg Avn), Brig Asif(Comd), Col Shahid (Ci Flying), Lt Col Tariq, Maj Waqas, Maj Omar

Standing L to R:- Capt Wali, Capt Sadi, Maj Usman, Capt Farooq, Capt Kashif, Capt Arslan, Capt Shafaat, Capt Asim, Capt Ahmed, (2nd Row) Capt Usman, Lt Daniyal, Capt Mustafa, Capt Aftab, Maj Faisal, Maj Hamza

Standing L to R:- Capt Monam, Capt Wasif, Lt Amir, Capt Waqas, Capt Hassan, Capt Fahad, Capt Ayaz, Capt Usman, Capt Muneeb, (3rd Row) Capt Mansoor, Capt Junaid, Capt Sami, Capt Qasim, Lt Hamza, Capt Furqan, Lt Osama, Capt Mouaz

Standing L to R:- Lt Raza, Lt Owais, Capt Shams, Capt Shoaib, Capt Hammad, Lt Khursheed, Capt Junaid, Lt Awab, Capt Suleman, (4th Row) Capt Hamza, Capt Hassan, Capt Saif, Lt Bilal

Sitting L to R:- Lt Jahangir(R), Lt Col Salman (Cfi Fw), Col Saeed (Dy Comd), Brig Asif (Comd), Maj Gen Najeeb(Goc Avn), Capt Mohsin(Course Senior), Brig Javed (Dir Trg), Col Shahid(Ci Flying), Lt Col Tariq,

Standing L to R:- Maj Hamza, Capt Changaiz, Maj Shafat, Capt Usman, Capt Ammar, Capt Hamza, Maj Shujat, (1st Row) Maj Ehtisham Maj Mahdi, Maj Khurram, Maj Umair,

Standing L to R:- Lt Ismail, Lt Daniyal, Capt Saad, Capt Shabbir, Capt Zaeeshan, Capt Waqas, Capt Zeeshan Iqbal, (2nd Row) Lt Usman Shouqat, Lt Qaiser, Lt Umar, Capt Muhammad Hamza,

Standing L to R:- (3rd Row) Lt Afaq, Capt Affan, Capt Umair, Lt Junaid, Capt Usman, Lt Shajar, Lt Aziz, Capt Adil,

Sitting L to R:- Maj Shujahat, Maj Khurram, Lt Col Adnan (Cfifw), Col Yasir (Dy Comd), Maj Gen Nadeem Yousuf (Goc Avn), Lt Gen Aamir(30 Corps Comd), Capt Adnan (Course Senior), Brig Riazat Ullah(Comdt), Col Imran (Ci Flying), Maj Ahmed, Maj Fayyaz

Standing L to R:- Capt Sarmad, Capt Pervaiz, Lt Faheem, Capt Usman, Lt Qasim, Capt Mohid, Capt Mughera, Capt Ashir, (1st Row) Capt Ishfaq, Capt Roshan, Lt Nausherwan, Maj Waleed, Maj Ali Shan,

Standing L to R:- Capt Mujahid, Capt Gohar, Capt Hassan, Capt Talha, Capt Hamza, Capt Ali, Lt Sarmad, Capt Idrees, (1st Row) Capt Tauqeer, Capt Muhammad Hassan, Capt Zain, Maj Aman, Maj Arsan

Sitting L to R:- Maj Kuhrram, Maj Ahmed, Lt Col Adnan (Cfi Fw), Brig Riazat Ullah (Comd), Lt Gen Sheraryar (Goc 2 Art Div) Capt Suleman(Course Senior), Col Yasir (Dy Comd), Maj Waqar, Maj Fayyaz,

Standing L to R:- (1st Row) Lt Allauddin, Capt Munam, Capt Hamza, Maj Tauqeer, Capt Sarmad, Capt Farkhad, Maj Waleed, Capt Fayyaz, Maj Minhas, Maj Changaiz, Capt Ali Irtaza, Lt Ammar

Standing L to R:- (2nd Row) Lt Jibran, Lt Asfandyar, Lt Shahzaib, Lt Ahsen, Capt Shahrukh

Sitting L to R:- Maj Qasim, Maj Minhas, Maj Ibrar, Maj Waqar, Lt Col Mudasir(Cfi Fw), Brig Salman (Comd), Maj Gen Nadeem (Goc Avn) Capt Ahmed(Course Senior), Lt Gen Aamir (Comd 30 Corps), Maj Gen Najeeb (Dg Avn), Col Imran (Dy Comd), Lt Col Zia, Lt Col Jahangir(R), Maj Fakhir, Capt Ali, Capt Farhan, Lt Col Fahkar

Standing L to R:- Capt Aimal, Capt Shaheer, Capt Wajahat,, Capt Hassan Shahzad, Lt Muneeb, Capt Musa, Lt Maqood, Capt Amir, (1st Row) Capt Hassam, Lt Luqman, Lt Ehsan, Capt Sami Ullah, Capt Asad, Capt Awais, Capt Shayan,, Lt Adnan, Capt Mazhar Capt Shuja, Capt Ahsan Tariq,

Standing L to R:- Lt Hassan, Capt Ahsan, Capt Muhammad, Capt Imad, Capt Zain, Lt Babar, Capt Asad Mughal, Capt Ashiq, Capt Saram (2nd Row) Lt Awn Mustafa

Sitting L to R:- Maj Qasim, Maj Mustafa, Lt Col Faisal, Col Imaad(Ci Flying), Brig Sohail (Comdt), Maj Gen Nadeem (Goc Avn), Maj Gen Ahmed Ali Al-Dabeis (Ksa), Capt Usama (Course Senior), Maj Gen Najeeb(Dg Avn), Col Haroon(Dy Comd) Lt Col Mudasir (CFI FW), Maj Ibrar, Maj Mujtaba (1st Row)

Standing L to R:- Capt Junaid, Maj Munam, Maj Furqan, Maj Shayan, Maj Ayaz, Maj Fahad, Maj Hamza, Maj Fayyaz, Capt Ragheb Capt Shahzaib, Capt Abu Baker, Capt Fahad

Standing L to R:- Capt Hamas, Capt Asadullah, Capt Usman, Lt Abubakar, Capt Arslan, Lt Arsal, Capt Asfand, Lt Hammad, Lt Usman, Capt Nazakat, Capt Uzair (2nd Row)

Standing L to R:- Capt Abdul Moeed, Capt Mafaz, Capt Daniyal, Capt Murtaza, Capt Abdullah, Capt Arslan (3rd Row)

Sitting L to R:- Maj Fahad, Maj Ayaz, Maj Sami, Col Imaad, (Ci Flying), Brig Sohail(Comdt), Lt Gen Imdad(30 Corps Comd), Capt Raheel(Course Senior), Col Imran (Dy Comd), Lt Col Umair (CFI FW), Maj Basit, Maj Talha

Standing L to R:- Lt Arras, Capt Mobeen, Capt Danyal, Lt Faiq, Capt Babar, Capt Aizaz, Lt Talal, Capt Farhan, Lt Salman, (First Row) Lt Muhammad, Lt Zubair, Capt Nawaz, Capt Asfandyar

Standing L to R:- Lt Haider, Lt Haris, Lt Arslan, Capt Noor, Lt Atif, Lt Hamza, Capt Lyees, Lt Shah, Lt Awal, Lt Mubashir, (2nd Row) Capt Siddique

Sitting L to R:- Maj Masud, Maj Babar Farooqi, Lt Col Babar, Col Tahir(Dy Comd), Brig Inam Kareem(Comdt), Maj Gen Javed Aslam (Goc Avn). Capt Wasif (Course Senior), Col Nadeem, Lt Col Mzahar(Cfi Rw), Lt Col Abid, Lt Col Shahid

Standing L to R:- (1st Row) Maj Shahid, Maj Rizwan, Maj Mohsin, Maj Farooq, Maj Nasrullah, Maj Irfan, Maj Afzal, Maj Ahmed, Maj Atif Maj Kusrow, Maj Naveed,

Standing L to R:- Lt Nadeem, Lt Sohail, Lt Ali Raj, Lt Bilal, Lt Shahid, Capt Kazim, Capt Usman, Capt Rehan, Capt Sattar, Lt Fahad, (2nd Row)

Standing L to R:- (3rd Row) Lt Rizwan, Capt Ghani, Lt Waqas, Lt Saqib

Sitting L To R:-	Maj Babar, Maj Zahid, Cdr Nadeem, Lt Col Tariw(Cfi Fw), Col Mazhar (Dy Comd), Brig Inam (Comdt), Maj Gen Javed Capt Qasim (Course Senior), Col Tahir (Ci Flying), Maj Nabeel, Maj Tanveer, Maj Usmani, Maj Atif
Standing L to R:- (1st Row)	Capt Hassan, Lt Wajeeh, Lt Adnan, Lt Ali, Capt Farooq, Lt Hassan, Capt Mustafa, Lt Bilal, Capt Abrar, Capt Abbas Hussain, Capt Badar Ul Duja, Lt Babar
Standing L to R:- (2nd Row)	Lt Amir, Lt Naqi Abbas, Capt Naveed, Capt Shehzad

Sitting L to R:- Maj Tariq, Maj Imran, Cdr Nadeem, Lt Col Tariq(Cfi Rw), Brig Shahid Sardar (Comd), Capt Amir(Course Senior), Col Mazhar (Dy Comd), Col Tahir (Ci Tac), Maj Tanvir,
Sitting L to R:- Maj Ahmed, Lt Ahad, Lt Zeeshan, Maj Abid, Capt Muzamil, Capt Taimoor, Capt Asif, Maj Amir Sharif, Maj Jahanzeb
(1st Row)
Sitting L to R:- Lt Kamran, Lt Asim, Lt Asad Ullah, Capt Farhan, Lt Haroon, Lt Waseem, Lt Jawad, Lt Asim, Capt Tahir, Capt Sheraz
(2nd Row)

Stitting L to R:- Maj Babar, Maj Nayyab, Maj Tariq, Cdr Nadeem, Lt Col Ishtiaq, Col Mazhar(Dy Comd), Brig Shahid(Comdt), Maj Gen Javed Aslum Tahir(Goc Avn) Lt Gen Ahsan Saleem Hayat (Vcoas), Capt Irfan (Course Senior), Maj Gen Taqi Naseer Rizvi (Dg Avn), Col Anjum(Ci Flyiing), Lt Col Tariq(Cfi Rw), Lt Col Tanveer, Maj Kuhrram, Maj Tahir, Maj Rizwan

Standing L To R:- Maj Farruhk, Maj Bangush, Maj Hashmi, Lt Hussnain, Maj Mumtaz, Maj Bilal, Maj Umer, Capt Usman, Lt Waqar, Capt Imran, Maj Abid, Maj Mansoor, Capt Ali, Maj Mujtaba, Maj Zubair, Maj Butt, Maj Jahanzib, Lt Cdr Shahid

(1st Row)

Standing L to R:- Capt Zamarak, Lt Basit, Capt Danish, Capt Zulfiqar, Capt Shoaib, Capt Khabeer, Capt Arslan, Lt Amroose, Lt Ahmed, Lt Najam Saqib

(2nd Row)

Stitting L to R:-	Maj Farruhk, Maj Tahir, Cdr Nadeem, Lt Col Tariq(Cfi Rw), Col Mazhar(Dy Comd), Brig Shahid (Comdt) Lt Gen Muhaamad Waseem (Comd 30 Corps), Capt Shahid (Course Senior), Maj Gen Taqi Naseer Rizvi(Dg Avn)\ Col Anjum(Citac), Lt Col Babar, Lt Col Ishfaq, Maj Tqariq
Standing L To R:-	Maj Zubair, Lt Cdr Shahid, Maj Hashmi, Maj Bangash, Capt Khurram, Capt Abrar, Maj Kawish
(1st Row)	Capt Nauman, Maj Umer, Capt Shoaib, Capt Asim, Capt Adeel, Capt Imran, Capt Sanaullah, Capt Javed, Capt Mansoor
Standing L To R:-	Capt Rehan, Capt Javed Alam, Capt Obaid, Lt Haseeb Ullah, Capt Sajid, Capt Hamees Ullah
(2nd Row)	

Stitting L to R:- Maj Salahudin, Maj Tauqeer, Maj Kuhrram, Maj Shahid, Col Anjum(Ci Tac), Brig Shahid Sardar (Comdt), Maj Gen Waqar Ahmed Kingravi (Goc Avn), Capt Haroon (Course Senior), Col Mazhar (Dy Comd), Lt Col Shahid (Cfirw), Maj Shahid, Maj Babar, Maj Ahsan

Standing L to R:- Lt Comd Zahid, Maj Mansoor, Capt Adil, Capt Ali, Lt Omer, Lt Khurram, Lt Adnan, Lt Asif, Capt Zia (1st Row) Lt Farhan, Capt Musharaf, Maj Bangush, Maj Kahwar, Maj Abid, Cdr Shahid, Capt Mansoor

Standing L to R:- Maj Wasi, Maj Mubashir, Capt Mazhar, Lt Asad, Lt Usman, Capt Zeeshan, Lt Fayyaz, Capt Khayam (2nd Row) Lt Saad, Capt Shehryar, Lt Jauhar

Sitting L to R:- Maj Khurram, Maj Tariq, Col Anjum(Ci Tac), Brig Shahid Sardar(Comd), Maj Gen Waqar(Goc Avn), Capt Rehman, Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood (Dg Avn), Col Mazher (Dy Comd), Lt Col Shahid (Cfi Rw), Maj Shahid Butt,

Standing L to R:- Cdr Zahid, Maj Abid, Maj Rizwan, Maj Ahsan, Maj Fawad, Maj Sallahudin, Maj Mansoor, Maj Bangush, (1st Row) Maj Kahwar, Maj Mubashir, Maj Sarfraz, Maj Khalid

Standing L to R:- Capt Mohsin, Capt Aleem, Capt Munim, Capt Zain, Capt Shahayan, Capt Usman, Capt Imran, Capt Jawad, (2nd Row) Lt Faisal, Lt Waqar, Cdr Shahid, Lt Shahid, Lt Nasir, Lt Noor

Standing L to R:- Lt Sheraz, Capt Zulqarnain, Capt Waqas, Lt Abdullah, Capt Bahram, Lt Javed, Capt Noman, Capt Imran,
(3rd Row)

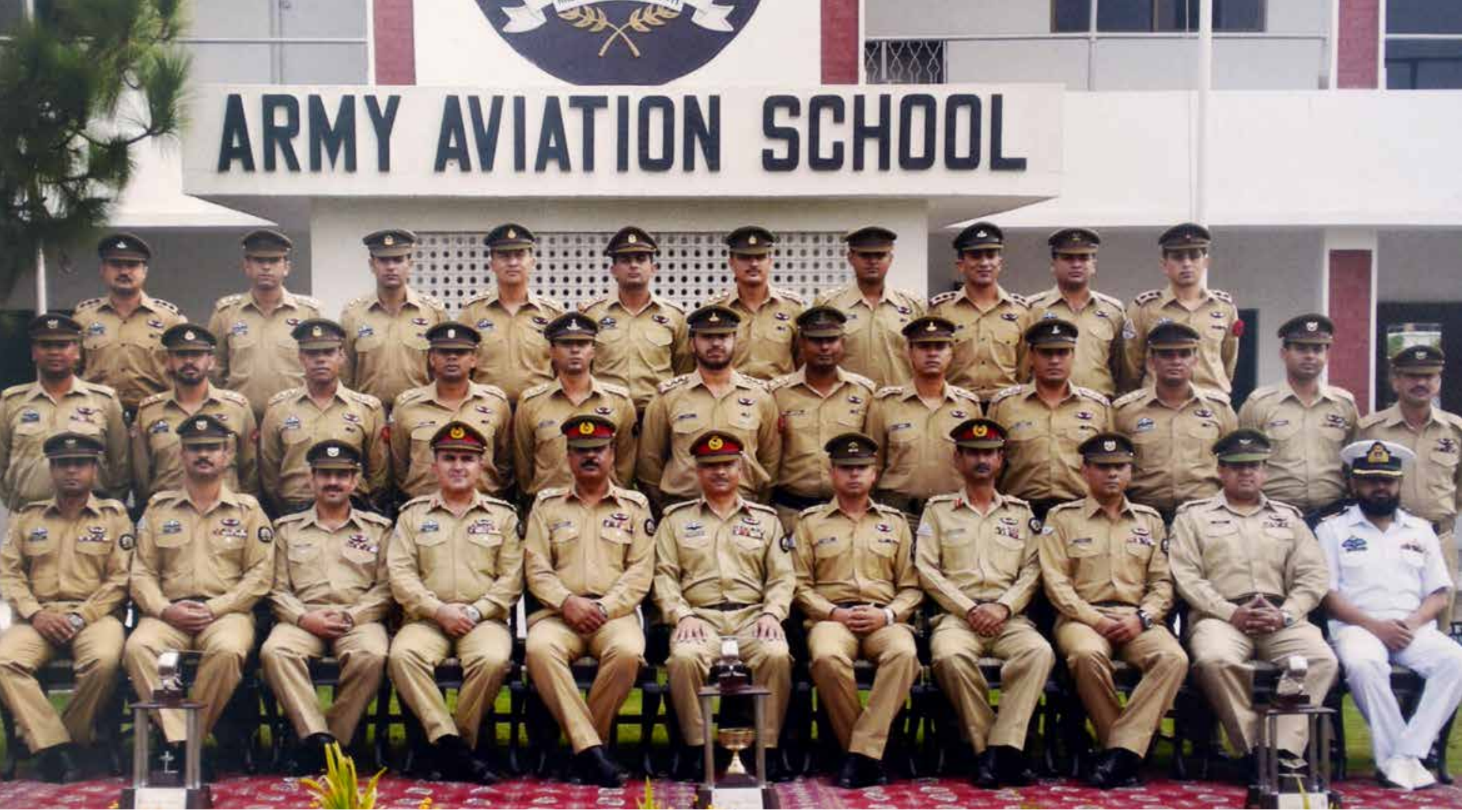
Sitting L To R:- Cdr Zafer, Maj Khurrm, Lt Col Shahid (Cfi Rw), Col Rashid (Ci Flying), Brig Sadaqat Ali(Comd), Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah (Goc Avn), Lt Gen Nadeem Taj(Comd 30 Corps), Capt Mubashir (Cousr Senior), Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood,, Col Mazhar(Dy Comd), Lt Col Salahudin, Lt Col Shahzad(R), Cdr

Standing L To R:- Maj Faisal, Maj Babar, Lt Fahad, Capt Khayam, Lt Wasif, Capt Ali, Capt Umer, Capt Adeel, Capt Nauman, Lt Mushtaq, Maj Arslan, Maj Yousaf, Maj Sameer, Maj Babar, Maj Usman, Maj Sohail,

(1st Row)

Standing L To R:- Capt Shahbaz, Capt Jalal, Capt Munawar, Capt Shahrukh, Capt Omer, Capt Shafi, Capt Rizwan,

(2nd Row)



Standing 1st Row: Maj Sarfraz, Maj Asim, Col Rashid Ullah Beg (CI Flaying,) Brig Sadaqat Ali Khan (Comd), Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah Khan (GOC), Capt Waqar (Course Snr), Col Syed Muhammad Mazhar (Dy Comd), Lt Col Shahid Latif (CFI) Maj Khurrum, Cdr Zafer

Standing 2nd Row: Maj Sameer, Lt Adnan, Capt Arsalan, Lt Ahad, Capt Ali, Capt Rehan, Capt Abdullah, Capt Aleem,

Standing 3rd Row: Capt Altamash, Capt Mohsin, Capt Yasir, Lt Mohsin, Lt Rizwan, Capt Irfaan. Capt Majid. Capt Waqas, Capt Zeb, Capt Raza,

Sitting 1st Row: Lt Col (R) Shahzad, Lt col Salahuddin, Lt Col Qaiser Zahoor, Col Wasiq Khalil (Dy Comdt), Maj Gen Tanveer Ullah (GOC Army Avn) Chief Guest Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmed (Corps Comd Mangla). Capt Noman (Course Senior), Brig Sadaqat Ali Khan (Base comd). Col Rashid Ullah Baig (CI Flying), Lt Col Sohail Sadiq.

Standing 2nd Row: Lt Col (R) Mumtaz, Maj Ahmed Farooq. Maj Yousaf, Maj Sameer Samad, Capt Hamid. Maj Naveed Zafar, Maj Usman, Maj (R) Nasrullah. Capt Nasrullah. Lt Yasir, Capt Kamran,

Standing 3rd Row: Capt Imran, Capt Azam, Capt Faroz, Capt Kurram, Capt Barak ullah. Capt Murtaza, Capt Younas, Capt Majid, Capt Sufain. Capt Furqan, Capt Nasir,

Sitting L to R: Lt Col Atif Lt Col Sohail, Col Irfan(Ci Flying), Maj Gen Nasser Khan Janjua Hi(M) Vcgs(B), Maj Gen Taqi Naseer Razvi (Dgavn) Lt Gen Rahil Sharif Hi (M) (Corps Comd), Lt Gen Waheed Arshad Hi(M)Tbt (Chief Guest), Capt Tamuir (Course Snr) Maj Gen Raja Mohammad Arif Nazir Hi(M) (Goc Avn), Brig Sadaqat Ali Khan (Comdt), Col Wasiq Khalil Mehmood (Dy Comdt), Lt Col Qaisar (Cfirw) Lt Col Baber.

Standing 1st L to R: Lt Col (R) Shahzad, Maj (R) Nasrullah, Maj Naveed Zafar, Lt Col Zahid, Lt Minhaj, Lt Wajih, Capt Azhar, Capt Jawad. Capt Umair, Capt Zubair, Maj Saqib, Maj Naveed Abbasi, Majarslan, Lt Cdr Tariq (Pn), Lt Col (R) Mumtaz.

Standing 2nd L To R: Cap Awais, Capt Omer, Capt Amjat, Lt Ali, Capt Shahbaz, Capt Asad, Capt Arslan, Capt Salman, Capt Mubashar, Lt Noor, Lt Tousif, Capt Sajid, Capt Nauman, Capt Fazal, Capt Hamid, Capt Kashif.

Standing 3rd L.to R: Capt Zeeshan, Lt Waseem, Capt Sultan, Capt Salam, Captanjum, Capt Saud, Capt Waqas, Lt Waleed, Capt Afnan.

Sitting L to R:-	Lt Col Zain(R), Maj Javed, Lt Col Ahsan, Lt Col Sohail(Cfi Rw), Col Nadeem (Ciflying), Brig Nasir (Comdt) Gen Ashfaq Pervaiz Keyani(Coas), Capt Irfan, Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood (Goc Avn), Col Qaiser(Dy Comd) Lt Col Arslan, Lt Col Mumtaz(R), Maj Nisar (R)
Standing L To R:	Capt Irfan, Capt Shahzad, Capt Amir, Capt Adnan, Lt Hassan, Maj Musa, Maj Shahzad, Maj Jawad (1st Row) Maj Imran, Cdr Khuram, Maj Maqbool, Maj Usman, Maj Shahzad, Maj Imaad, Maj Asif,
Standing L To R:- (2nd Row)	Capt Aftab, Capt Akbar, Capt Liqat, Capt Aftab, Capt Ali, Capt Jahan, Capt Yasir, Capt Hamad, Capt Tashkeel, Capt Akhter, Capt Saqib, Lt Tariq, Capt Waqar, Capt Ubaid, Capt Hamad, Capt Arif.
Standing L To R:- (3rd Row)	Capt Hassan, Capt Saad, Capt Adnan, Capt Asif, Capt Usman, Capt Nouman, Capt Mujtaba, Capt Umar, Lt Kamran, Capt Ali, Capt Ansar, Lt Mudasir, Capt Sheryar, Lt Haris

Sitting L to R:- Maj Adil, Lt Col Mumtaz(R), Lt Col Nayab, Lt Col Shahid, Lt Col Sohail(Cfi Rw), Brig Nasir(Comd), Maj Gen Nasir Mehmood (Goc Avn), Capt Asim(Course Senior), Col Qaiser (Dy Comd), Lt Col Tanveer, Lt Col Javed, Lt Col Iftikhar, Lt Col Farrukh,

Standing L to R:- Maj Nasrullah(R), Maj Imran, Maj Usman, Maj Imran Alam, Capt Omer, Capt Bilal, Capt, Ali, (1st Row) Capt Sehzad, Capt Adeel, Maj Ali, Maj Jawad, Lt Cdr Sher, Maj Usman, Maj Haroon

Standing L to R:- Capt Zuhaib, Capt Maisam, Capt Naveed, Capt Daniyal, Capt Afzaal, Capt Wajid, Capt Salman, (2nd Row) Capt Rashid, Capt Mehboob, Capt Adnan, Maj Sheraz,

Standing L to R:- Capt Umair, Capt Usman, Capt Adnan, Capt Khurram, Capt Sohail, Capt Abubakar, Capt Inam, (3rd Row) Capt Bilal, Capt Sohail, Capt Wajahat, Capt Khalil, Capt Baseer,

Sitting L to R:- Maj Ali, Lt Col Mumtaz(R), Lt Col Bangash(Cfi Rw), Col Javed, Col Quaiser(Dy Comd), Brif Asif(Comdt) Maj Gen Ikram Ul Huq(Vcgs B), Capt Adil(Course Senior), Maj Anjum Enayat (GOC Avn), Col Duad(Ci Flying), Lt Col Shahid, Maj Nisar(R), Maj Qazi

Standing L To R:- (1st Row) Capt Waqar, Maj Rehaan, Maj Asad, Maj Mustafa, Maj Waqar, Capt Tanveer, Capt Adeel, Capt Luqmaan, Capt Ali, Capt Sheraz, Capt Murtaza, Maj Rizwan

Standing L To R:- (2nd Row) Capt Waqas, Capt Ejaz, Capt Asif, Capt Waqas, Capt Nawaz, Capt Asad, Capt Ali Waheed

Sitting L to R:- Lt Col Mohsin, Lt Col Waqar (CFI RW), Col Yasir (DY Comd), Brig Riazat Ullah(Comd), Maj Gen Nadeem (GOC Avn), Lt Gen Kahlid Zia (31 Corps Comd), Capt Hammad (Course Senior), Maj Najeeb (Dg Avn), Brig Mansoor (Dir Trg), Col Imran (CI Flying), Lt Col Ali Imran,

Standing L to R:- Maj Shehryar, Maj Azam, Capt Shahan, Capt Waheed, Capt Shameel, Capt Daniyal, Lt Adnan, Lt Cdr Taimoor, (1st Row) Capt Mohid, Capt Arslan, Lt Hamza, Lt Shazaib, Maj Basit, Maj Ammad,

Standing L to R:- Capt Hamza Khan, Lt Umar, Capt Shahzad, Lt Mauz, Capt Hamza Babar, Capt Haseeb, Capt Assad, Capt Faran (2nd Row) Capt Faizan, Capt Kaleem Ullah, Capt Zeeshan, Capt Abdul Qahar, Lt Umar Farooq Afridi,

Standing L to R:- (3rd Row) Maj Iftikhar, Maj Shaheryar,

Sitting L to R:- Lt Cdr Hassan, Maj Jawad, Maj Ubid, Maj Fakkhar, Cdr Taimoor, Brig Salman(Comd), Maj Gen Nadeem(Goc Avn), Capt Moeez(Course Senior), Lt Gen Aamir (Comd 30 Corps), Maj Gen Najeeb (Dg Avn), Col Imran (Dy Comd), Lt Col Imad Lt Col Jahangir(R), Lt Col Fakkhar, Lt Col Hamid, Lt Col Shoiab, Lt Col Tamzeel,

Standing L To R:- Capt Dilawar, Capt Khaldoon, Capt Hamza, Capt Zeeshan, Capt Yasir, Lt Zaryab, Capt Usama, Capt Tajwar, (1st Rown) Lt Ahmad, Lt Adnan Ali, Capt Adnan, Capt Usman, Capt Farhan, Capt Hamza, Maj Arslan, Maj Mehbob,

Standing L To R:- (2nd Rown) Lt Wasay, Capt Ali Bukhari, Capt Abdul Rehman, Lt Junaid, Lt Aftab, Capt Azeem, Lt Talha, Lt Ahmad,

Sitting L to R:- Cdr Taimoor, Lt Col Rizwan, Lt Col Awais, Col Imaad(Ci Flying), Brig Sohail (Comdt), Maj Gen Nadeem (Goc Avn), Maj Gen Ahmed Ali Al-Dabeis(Ksa), Capt Tahseen (Course Senior), Maj Gen Najeeb(Dg Avn), Col Haroon (Dy Comd), Lt Col Awais (Cfi Rw), Lt Col Umer, Lt Cdr Ahmad

Standing L to R:- (1st Row) Lt Col Adil, Maj Waseem, Maj Sohail, Maj Hammad, Maj Amer, Maj Samiullah, Maj Shers, Maj Sarosh, Maj Wajid, Maj Rashid, Lt Col Abid, Capt Rashif

Standing L To R:- (2nd Row) Capt Abbubakar, Capt Abdullah, Capt Mohib, Capt Adil, Capt Saeed, Capt Salman Sardar, Capt Hussain, Ca[T Daniyal, Capt Shehbaz, Capt Owais, Lt Shahmir, Lt Mustafa

Standing L To R:- Capt Capr Samic, Capt Bikal, Capr Zeeshan, Capt Salman, Capt Zeeshan Amjad, Capt Zahid, Capt Ahmed Mir (3rd Row)

Sitting L to R:- Cdr Tairmoor, Maj Irfan, Lt Col Abid, Col Imaad, (Ci Flying), Brig Sohail (Comdt), Lt Gen Imdad (30 Corps Comd), Capt Afrasiab(Course Senior), Col Imran (Dy Comd), Lt Col Awais(Cfi Rw), Lt Col Mohsin, Lt Col Waqar, Cdr Zubair

Standing L to R:- Maj Shahzad, Maj Ali, Maj Nauman, Capt Sheh Mureed, Maj Zubair, Maj Umair, Maj Tayab, Lt Musa, (First Row) Lt Muntazir, Maj Rehan

Standing L to R:- Capt Saad, Capt Ali, Capt Ahmer, Capt Sohail, Capt Ahmed Yar, Capt Mudassar, Lt Faisal, Capt Tariq, (2nd Row) Capt Asad, Capt Talha, Capt Hussain, Capt Zeeshan, Capt Ahmad

Standing L to R:- Capt Zuhad, Capt Ahsan, Capt Mateen, Capt Hamza, Capt Latif, Lt Abraiz, Capt Mehran, Capt Bilal, Capt Saif

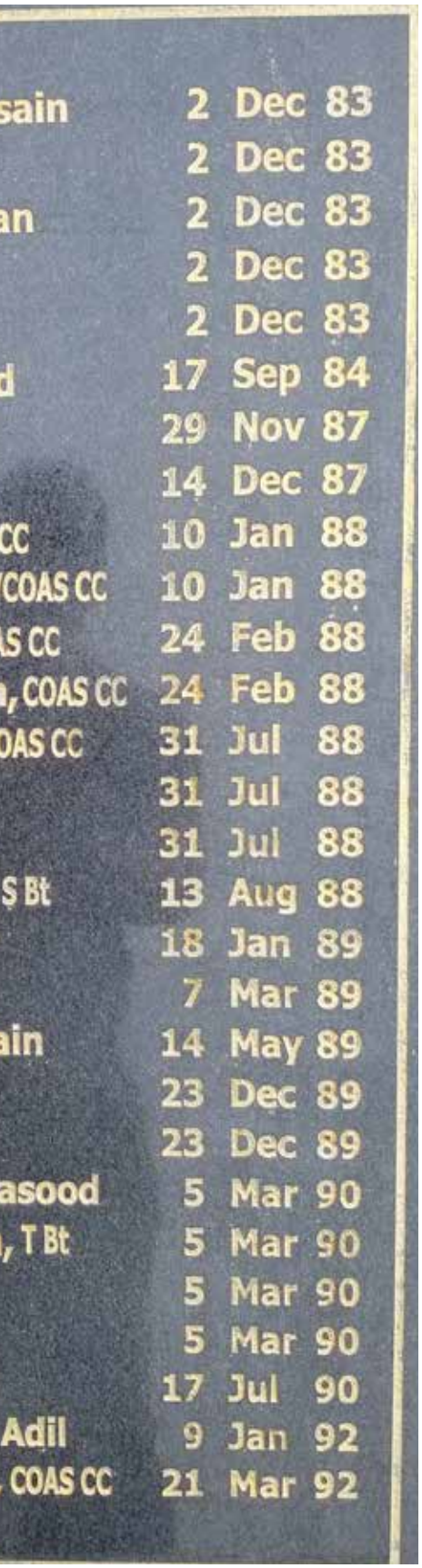
(3rd Row) Capt Uzair, Capt Daim, Capt Babrak, Capt Mirza, Capt Behram

Pilot Course 66

Shaheeds of Army Aviation

Capt	Wajid Ali Khan	2 May 53
Capt	A.M.S Ahmed	11 Jun 53
Maj	Maqbool Ahmed	1 Dec 60
Capt	Syed Aziz Ul Hassan	1 Dec 60
Capt	Ikram	10 Dec 61
Capt	Riaz Malik	28 Feb 63
Capt	Sarfaraz	28 Feb 63
Capt	Mirza Sultan Baig	6 Dec 65
N/Sub	Abdul Jalil	5 May 71
Sep	Umer Hayat	25 Oct 71
Sep	Muhammad Ramzan	5 Dec 71
Nk	Luft Ur Rehman	6 Dec 71
Capt	Aftab Ahmed Khan	7 Dec 71
Hav	Ashraf	7 Dec 71
Nk	Sadiq Hussain	10 Dec 71
Maj	Muhammad Qasim	4 Jan 72
Maj	Anwar Mohi Ud Din	8 Feb 72
Maj	Zahir Shah	14 Feb 72
Sep	Irshad Hussain	13 Mar 73
Nk	Naseem Ali Shah	16 Apr 74
Maj	Tanweer Ahmed	7 Mar 75
Lnk	Irshad Ahmed	24 Jan 77
Sub	Sardar Khan	24 Jan 77
Nk	Zaheer Hussain	24 Jan 77
Maj	Muslim Ghani	30 Jul 79
Maj	Ansar Ahmed	30 Jul 79
Maj	Shahnawaz	11 Jun 80
Maj	Zahid Jadoon	7 Sep 80

Maj	Mahmood Huss
Capt	Shafqat
Sub	Khuda Dad Kha
Hav	M. Anwar
Nk	M. Saleem
Capt	Tariq Mehmood
Capt	Nadeem Ullah
Capt	Nadeem
Lt Col	Arif Aziz, VCOAS
Lt Col	Saleem Raza, V
Maj	Ijaz Haider, COA
Capt	Waqar Hussain
Col	Sajid Islam, VC
Hav	Abdul Haq
Hav	Liaqat Ali
Maj	Khalid Akhtar,
Capt	Hamid Sarwar
Capt	Shahid Irshad
Capt	Tasawar Hussa
Capt	Amer Yasin
Capt	Syed Raza Ali
Capt	Syed Kamal Ma
Capt	Abdul Qayyum
Nk	Rab Nawaz
Nk	Sultan
Capt	Waqar Ahmed
Maj	Mohd Naveed
Maj	Syed Tahir Ali,



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	29	Nov	87
	14	Dec	87
CC	10	Jan	88
COAS CC	10	Jan	88
S CC	24	Feb	88
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OAS CC	31	Jul	88
	31	Jul	88
	31	Jul	88
S Bt	13	Aug	88
	18	Jan	89
	7	Mar	89
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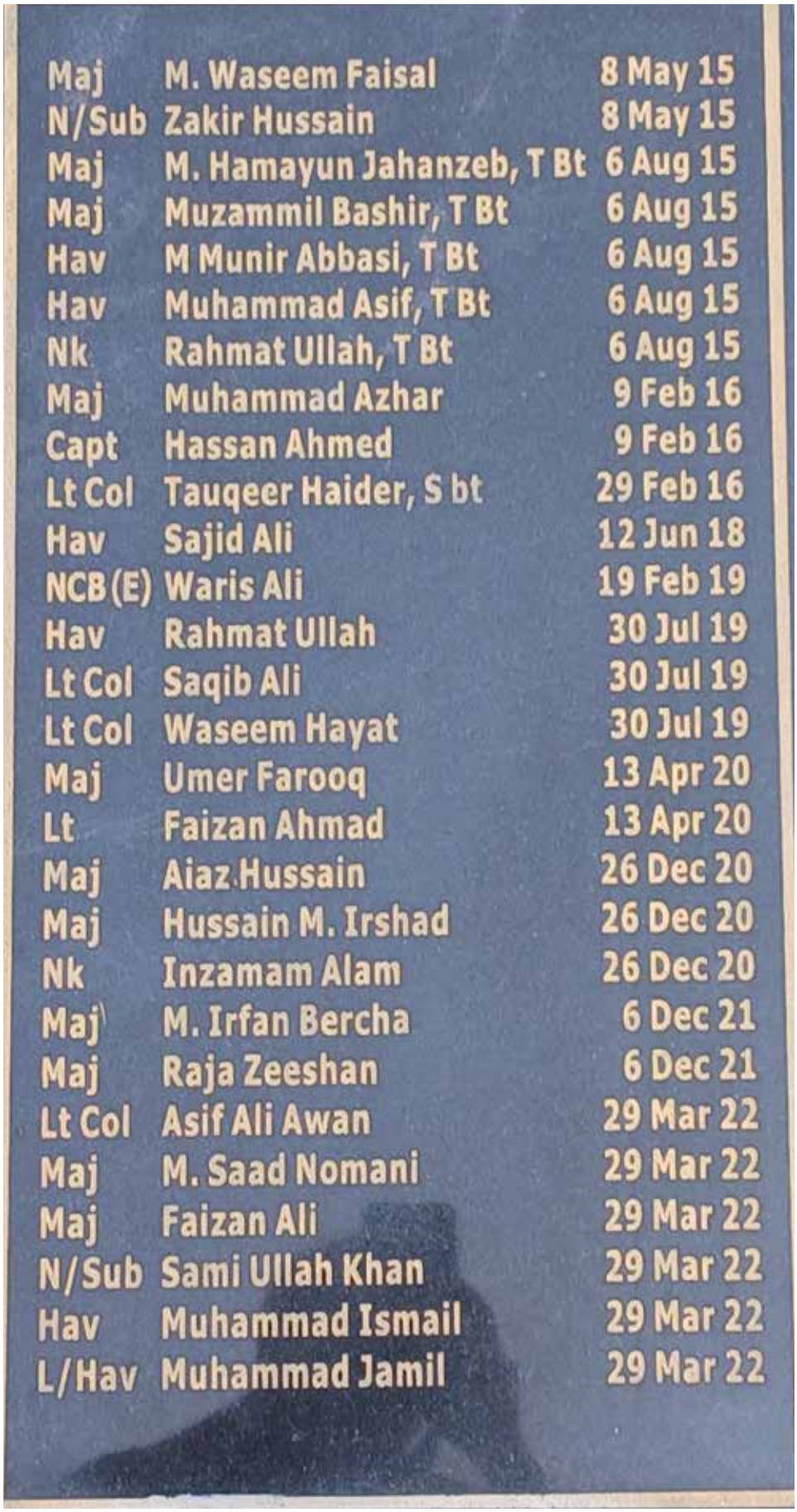
	17	Jul	90
Adil	9	Jan	92
COAS CC	21	Mar	92

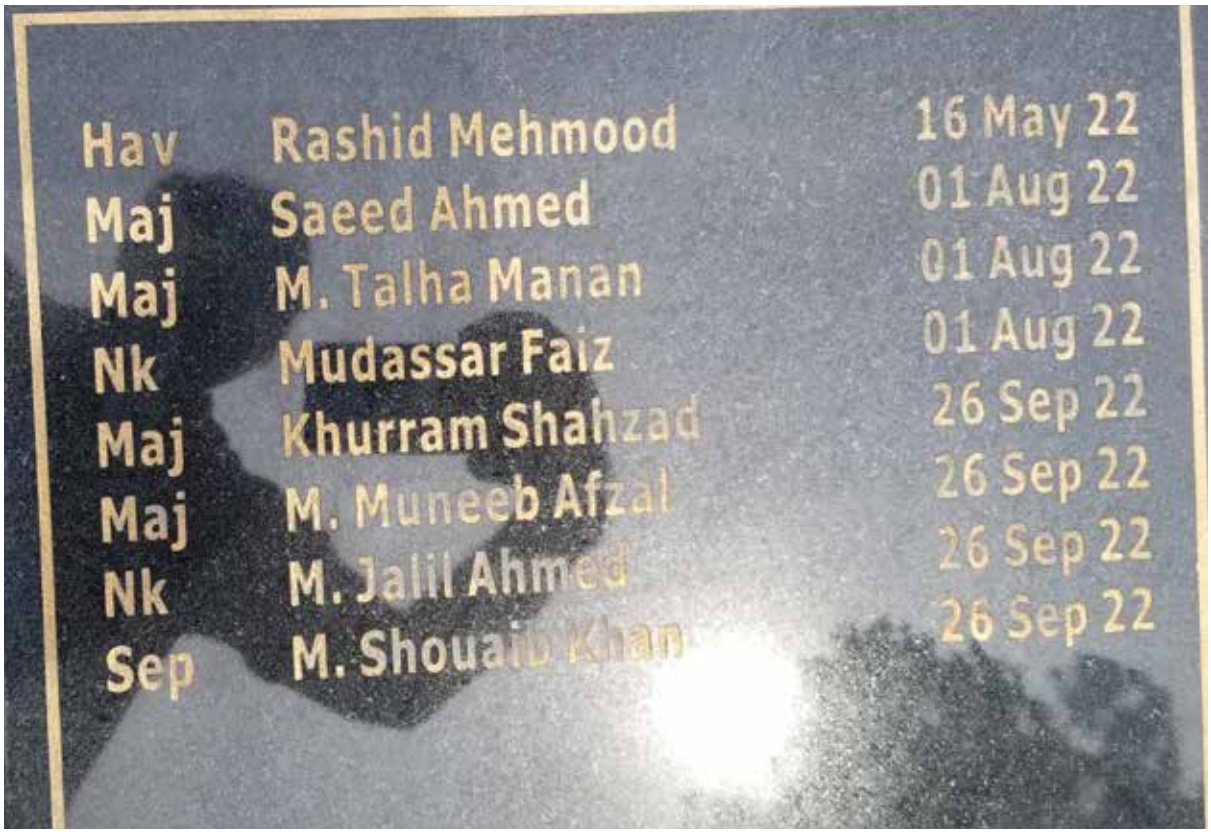
Capt	Muhammad Nawaz	21	Mar 92
Capt	Shahid Rehman Tariq	17	Jun 92
Maj	Khalid Sohail, COAS CC	1	Aug 92
Maj	Babar Ramzan, SJ	1	Aug 92
Maj	Rasheed Mansoor, COAS CC	2	Sep 92
Maj	Safdar Jahanzeb	2	Sep 92
Capt	Nasir Hussain	24	Apr 93
Capt	Raja Shahid Rehman	29	Apr 93
Lt Col	Nayyar Iqbal	4	Mar 98
Hav	Walayat Khan	4	Mar 98
Nk	Fiaz Khan	4	Mar 98
Maj	Khalid Javed	22	Jun 98
Maj	Tahir Amir	22	Jun 98
Capt	Shahzad Adnan	22	Jun 98
N/Sub	Waris Gul	22	Jun 98
Nk	Muhammad Farooq	22	Jun 98
Lnk	Muhammad Altaf	22	Jun 98
OCU	Zia Ullah Khan	22	Jun 98
Hav	Bashir Ahmed	4	Jun 99
Lt Col	Muhammad Hanif, SJ	11	Jun 99
Capt	M. Uzair, T Bt	11	Jun 99
Hav	M. Shabbir Asi, T Bt	11	Jun 99
Nk	Naseer Ahmed Malik, T Bt	11	Jun 99
Maj	Ahmed Waseem Bukhari	1	Jul 99
Capt	Masood Ullah Baig	31	Oct 99
Capt	Shahid Nisar, COAS CC	31	Oct 99
Maj	Syed Nadeem Ali	24	Apr 03
Maj	Imtiaz Ahmed, COAS CC	24	Apr 03

Capt Shujat Ali 8 Apr 04
Lt Col Zia Ud Din, COAS CC 29 Jun 04
Hav Muhammad Iqbal 29 Jun 04
L/Hav Muhammad Jahangir 29 Jun 04
Lt Col Noman Ghafoor, S Bt 5 Aug 04
Capt M. Imran Wasti, S Bt 5 Aug 04
Hav Rab Nawaz 5 Aug 04
Hav Abdul Malik 5 Aug 04
Nk M. Farman 5 Aug 04
NK M. Ashraf 5 Aug 04
Gnr Zafar Iqbal 5 Aug 04
Gnr Ghulam Murtaza 5 Aug 04
DMT Muhammad Sarfraz 5 Aug 04
Lt Col Ahmad Ali Shah, T Bt 15 Oct 05
Capt Abdul Rahim, COAS CC 15 Oct 05
Capt Shamas Naveed 21 Jun 06
Capt Faisal Khan 21 Jun 06
Lnk Ikram Ullah 21 Jun 06
Capt Naveed Ahmed 6 Feb 08
Capt M Haroon 6 Feb 08
Nk Amir Ali 6 Feb 08
Maj Muhammad Bilal 13 Aug 08
Capt Sohail Akbar, T Bt 3 Jul 09
Capt M. Khurram Shahzad, T Bt 3 Jul 09
Hav Hazrat Hussain, T Bt 3 Jul 09
Hav Asif Rashid, T Bt 3 Jul 09
Hav Ali Asghar 3 Jul 09
Hav Muhammad Azam 3 Aug 09

Nk	Nazim Hussain	3 Aug 09
Hav	Muhmmad Asghar	4 Aug 09
Nk	Abrar Ahmed	4 Aug 09
Nk	Masood Ahmed	5 Dec 09
Maj	Mudassar Razzaq, S Bt	10 Feb 10
Capt	Asim Karim, T Bt	10 Feb 10
Hav	Masood Ur Rehman	23 Feb 10
Capt	Rashid Hakeem	8 Apr 10
Hav	Nadeem Moen Ud Din	24 Oct 10
Hav	M. Azram	24 Oct 10
Nk	Nadeem Khan	24 Oct 10
Capt	M. Zahoor Ul Haq	22 Dec 10
Hav	Maqsood Ahmed	22 Dec 10
Nk	Itbar Khan	9 Jan 11
Lt Col	Syed Amer Abbas	1 Jun 11
Maj	Zahid Bari	23 May 12
Maj	Amir Azam	11 Jul 12
Hav	Zeeshan Haider	11 Jul 12
Sep	Noor Mustafa	11 Jul 12
Sep	Kaleem Ullah	12 Jul 12
Maj	Sohaib	13 Jul 12
Maj	Muhmmad Ali Kamal	8 Apr 14
Capt	Shujjat Ali	8 Apr 14
Maj	Muhammad Yasir	25 Jun 14
Capt	M. Murtaza Saeed	25 Jun 14
Nk	Muhammad Ameer	29 Jun 14
Sep	Talib Hussain	30 Mar 15
Maj	Altamash Riaz	8 May 15



Maj	M. Waseem Faisal	8 May 15
N/Sub	Zakir Hussain	8 May 15
Maj	M. Hamayun Jahanzeb, T Bt	6 Aug 15
Maj	Muzammil Bashir, T Bt	6 Aug 15
Hav	M Munir Abbasi, T Bt	6 Aug 15
Hav	Muhammad Asif, T Bt	6 Aug 15
Nk	Rahmat Ullah, T Bt	6 Aug 15
Maj	Muhammad Azhar	9 Feb 16
Capt	Hassan Ahmed	9 Feb 16
Lt Col	Tauqeer Haider, S bt	29 Feb 16
Hav	Sajid Ali	12 Jun 18
NCB (E)	Waris Ali	19 Feb 19
Hav	Rahmat Ullah	30 Jul 19
Lt Col	Saqib Ali	30 Jul 19
Lt Col	Waseem Hayat	30 Jul 19
Maj	Umer Farooq	13 Apr 20
Lt	Faizan Ahmad	13 Apr 20
Maj	Aiaz Hussain	26 Dec 20
Maj	Hussain M. Irshad	26 Dec 20
Nk	Inzamam Alam	26 Dec 20
Maj	M. Irfan Bercha	6 Dec 21
Maj	Raja Zeeshan	6 Dec 21
Lt Col	Asif Ali Awan	29 Mar 22
Maj	M. Saad Nomani	29 Mar 22
Maj	Faizan Ali	29 Mar 22
N/Sub	Sami Ullah Khan	29 Mar 22
Hav	Muhammad Ismail	29 Mar 22
L/Hav	Muhammad Jamil	29 Mar 22


Hav Rashid Mehmood 16 May 22
Maj Saeed Ahmed 01 Aug 22
Maj M. Talha Manan 01 Aug 22
Nk Mudassar Faiz 01 Aug 22
Maj Khurram Shahzad 26 Sep 22
Maj M. Muneeb Afzal 26 Sep 22
Nk M. Jalil Ahmed 26 Sep 22
Sep M. Shouaib Khan 26 Sep 22

PLANTED BY
FATHER OF
CAPT MURTAZA SAEED
(SHAHEED)
ON 7 JUL 2014

Summary of Ops Awards – 1965 To 2025

Sr.	Awards	Total
1.	SJ	15
2.	TJ	5
3.	S Bt	28
4.	T Bt	93
5.	IS	78
6.	Foreign Award	3
Gt Total		222

LIST OF GALLANTRY AWARDS

Ser	Rank / Name
SITARA-I-JURAT	
1.	Brig SLA Bokhari, 4 Army Avn Sqn – 1971
2.	Colonel Sehgal, 8 Army Avn Sqn – Chumik 1990
3.	Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babur - 1965
4.	Maj (later Honorary Major General) H. U. K. Niazi -1965 War
5.	Maj Abdul Latif Awan
Maj Akhtar, 2 Army Avn Sqn - 1965	
1.	Maj Babur Ramzan, 8 Army Avn Sqn - 1990
2.	Maj Fayyaz Ibrahim, 3 Army Avn Sqn – 1971
3.	Maj Hanif, 27 Army Avn Sqn – 1998 Kargil
4.	Maj Khalid Sultan, 8 Army Avn Sqn – 1992
5.	Maj Moazzam, 2 Army Avn Sqn – 1971
6.	Maj Qasim (Shaheed) - 1972
7.	Maj Riaz Ul Haq
8.	Maj Saeed Asmat – 1971
9.	Maj Sarfaraz Rabbani, 2 Army Avn Sqn – 1965
TAMGHA-I-JURAT	
1.	Maj Zafar – 1971
2.	Maj Suhail Sadiq – NWA
3.	Maj Muhammad Umar Farooq Rana - NWA
4.	Capt Iftikhar – 1971
5.	Capt Nadeem Raza - NWA
SITARA-I-BASALAT	
1.	Brig Syed Tirmizi
2.	Lt Col Safdar Hussain
3.	Lt Col Noman Ghafoor (Shaheed)
4.	Lt Col Zia Ud Din Javed
5.	Lt Col Aftab
6.	Lt Col Muhammad Ghaffar
7.	Lt Col Touqeer Haider (Shaheed)
8.	Lt Col Muhammad Parvez
9.	Maj (later Lieutenant General) Muhammad Maqbool
10.	Maj Aftab Ahmed
11.	Maj Ali Jawahar
12.	Maj Basharat Ahmed Noor
13.	Maj Khalid Akhtar
14.	Maj Mudassar Razzaq
15.	Maj Muhammad Akram

16.	Maj Muhammad Alamgir Khan
17.	Maj Muhammad Nawaz
18.	Maj Mumtaz Ahmed
19.	Maj Naeem Ullah khattak
20.	Maj Shahid Farooq Rana
21.	Maj Syed Tahir Ali
22.	Maj Zahoor Ahmed
23.	Capt Abdur Rahim
24.	Capt Imran Wasti
25.	Capt Irfan Aslam
26.	Capt Muhammad Imran
27.	Capt Muhammad Uzair
28.	Havildar Muhammad Rafique
TAMGHA-I-BASALAT	
1.	Brig Muhammad Wajahat Ali Ghuman
2.	Brig Nadeem Aslam Khan
3.	Col Tahir Masood Khan
4.	Lt Col Abid Saeed
5.	Lt Col Ahmed Ali Shah
6.	Lt Col Ahmed Rashid
7.	Lt Col Arif Shafique
8.	Lt Col Chanzeb Khan
9.	Lt Col Faisal Shahjahan
10.	Lt Col Hamid Hussain
11.	Lt Col Inam Karim
12.	Lt Col Irfan Hassan
13.	Lt Col Mubashar Mehmood Ch
14.	Lt Col Nawazish Ali
15.	Lt Col Rai Zahid Khizer
16.	Lt Col Raza Farooq
17.	Lt Col Shoaib Awan
18.	Lt Col Tehseen Khan
19.	Maj Abdul Lateef Awan
20.	Maj Abdul Qayyum
21.	Maj Abdul Rahim
22.	Maj Altaf Ur Rehman
23.	Maj Arsalan Shaheen
24.	Maj Ashfaq Ur Rehman
25.	Maj Ashraf Warraich
26.	Maj Attique Ur Rehman
27.	Maj Hanain Mehdi

28.	Maj Ijaz Haider Zaidi
29.	Maj Khalid Rashid Maooz
30.	Maj Khalid Saleem
31.	Maj Muhammad Bilal Anwar
32.	Maj Muhammad Bilal Khan
33.	Maj Muhammad Farooq
34.	Maj Muhammad Hamayun Jahanzeb
35.	Maj Muhammad Nabeel Khan
36.	Maj Muslim Ghani
37.	Maj Naeem Ullah Khattak
38.	Maj Nawazish
39.	Maj Qaiser
40.	Maj Rahmat Ullah (Maj Gen Retd) Late
41.	Maj Rashid Mansoor
42.	Maj Riffat Baig
43.	Maj Rizvi
44.	Maj Safdar Jahanzeb
45.	Maj Sajid Ilyas
46.	Maj Shahid Nazir
47.	Maj Shiraz Aman
48.	Maj Syed Tahir Ali
49.	Maj Umar Bin Imad
50.	Maj Zafeer Banghash
51.	Maj Zahid Bari
52.	Maj Zahoor
53.	Maj Zia Ud Din Javed
54.	Capt Abdul Qauyyum
55.	Capt Abdur Rahim
56.	Capt Asad Hameed
57.	Capt Asim Ali Khan
58.	Capt Asim Karim (Shaheed)
59.	Capt Azhar Akbar
60.	Capt Hassan Ahmed
61.	Capt Ijaz Haider Zaidi
62.	Capt Jawad Hamid
63.	Capt Khurram (Shaheed)
64.	Capt Mahmood Ul Hassain
65.	Capt Muhammad Ifzal
66.	Capt Muhammad Khurram
67.	Capt Muhammad Nawaz
68.	Capt Sohail Akbar

69.	Capt Usman Aftab Awan
70.	Capt Uzair
71.	Capt Waqar Hussain Baig
72.	Capt Waqas Hussain
73.	Capt Zia Ud Din (Lt Col Shaheed) UNO
74.	Sub Muhammad Asif
75.	Hav Ali Asghar (Shaheed)
76.	Hav Asif Rashed (Shaheed)
77.	Hav Hazrat Hussain (Shaheed)
78.	Hav Muhammad Asif
79.	Hav Muhammad Azram (Shaheed)
80.	Hav Muhammad Munir Abbasi
81.	Hav Nadeem Moin Ud Din (Shaheed)
82.	Hav Shabbir
83.	Nk Amir Saeed
84.	Nk Masood Ahmed (Shaheed)
85.	Nk Nadeem Khan
86.	Nk Rehmat Ullah
87.	Nk Riaz
88.	PA-38886 Lt Col Asif Ali Awan (Shaheed)
89.	PA-42745 Maj Muhammad Saad Noumani (Shaheed)
90.	PA-56586 Maj Faizan Ali (Shaheed)
91.	PJO-4411011 N/Sub Sami Ullah Khan (Shaheed)
92.	4424534 Hav Muhammad Ismail (Shaheed)
93.	3128553 L/Hav Muhammad Jamil Khan (Shaheed)
Imtiazi Sanad	
1.	Brig Anjum Irshad Khan
2.	Brig Aziz Ul Hassan Usmani
3.	Brig Muhammad Amir Khan
4.	Brig Tanveer Ullah Khan (Maj Gen Retd)
5.	Col Nasir Saleem Akhtar
6.	Col Rizwan Mahmud (Brig)
7.	Col Sadrar Sajjad Hussain (Brig Retd)
8.	Lt Col Babar Farooqui (Brig Retd)
9.	Lt Col Nadeem Yousaf.(Major General)
10.	Lt Col Muhammad Anjum Rafique
11.	Lt Col Muhammad Imran Afzal
12.	Lt Col Muhammad Khalil Dar (Maj Gen Retd)
13.	Lt Col Muhammad Waqar Fazal
14.	Lt Col Suhil Ekram
15.	Lt Col Zahid Halim Qureshi

16.	Lt Col Zia Mohy Ud Din
17.	Maj Aahad Zarrar
18.	Maj Aamer Masood
19.	Maj Abdul Hamid
20.	Maj Abid Rafique
21.	Maj Aftab Tahir
22.	Maj Ahmad Jawad Khan (Lt Col Retd)
23.	Maj Ahmed Mujtaba Azhar (Col Retd)
24.	Maj Alfat Ur Rehman
25.	Maj Arfaan Tahir Qureshi
26.	Maj Ashfaq Ur Rahman
27.	Maj Aurangzeb
28.	Maj Babar Baig (Col Retd)
29.	Maj Bilal Sultan Khan
30.	Maj Fakhar-e-Abbas
31.	Maj Fazal Rabbi
32.	Maj Hamid Riaz
33.	Maj Hasan Solat
34.	Maj Hilal Rashid Hasnat
35.	Maj Imran Ahmed Farid
36.	Maj Imran Yasin
37.	Maj Kashif Anwar
38.	Maj Kashif Raza
39.	Maj Moazam Javed
40.	Maj Mohammad Ali Raj
41.	Maj Muhamamd Farooq
42.	Maj Muhammad Aftab Qamar
43.	Maj Muhammad Asif Siddique
44.	Maj Muhammad Atif Saeed
45.	Maj Muhammad Farooq Ahmed Khan
46.	Maj Muhammad Naeem Aamir Azim
47.	Maj Muhammad Naman Ahmad
48.	Maj Muhammad Omer Talal
49.	Maj Muhammad Tahir Hanif
50.	Maj Muhammad Zubair
51.	Maj Nadeem Khan
52.	Maj Nasir Ahmed Khan
53.	Maj Nauman Haider Toor
54.	Maj Numan Babar
55.	Maj Raja Mustafa Abbas
56.	Maj Rashid Jaffar

57.	Maj Salman Munir Malik
58.	Maj Shafqat Ali
59.	Maj Shahid Ahmed
60.	Maj Shahid Sultan
61.	Maj Shahzad Akbar
62.	Maj Syed Kahsif Hussain
63.	Maj Tahir Mahmood
64.	Maj Umar Mushtaq
65.	Maj Usman Ahmed Khan
66.	Maj Zia Ur Rehman
67.	Capt Abrar Hussain
68.	Capt Ahmed Junaid
69.	Capt Amir Azam
70.	Capt Asim Karim Khan
71.	Capt Imaad Hussain Siddiqui
72.	Capt Malik Ameer Hamza
73.	Capt Mazhar Ali
74.	Capt Muhammad Aftab Qamar
75.	Capt Munim Khan
76.	Capt Shuaib
77.	Capt Syed Zulfiqar Ali
78.	SM Shabbir Ahmed
79.	Nk Mazhar
Foreign Awards	
1.	Maj Azam (Maj Gen Retd) – Belgium
2.	Maj Khalid Amir Rana (Lt Col Retd) - Slovakia
3.	Lt Col Rashid Ullah Baig (Brig Retd)
4.	Lt Col Khalid Rana

History of History

Maj Gen Khalil Dar

Without much of debate, the 9/11 incident is the most affecting event of our era, it affected Pakistan much more than any other country. When it occurred, initially there was not much to bothered about, by December 2001, Army Aviation was deployed in the field in anticipation of a war with India. By mid 2002, the squadrons were backed to the bases. I was posted in 27 Squadron and with passage of days the life started taking a transition as far as army aviation was concerned. There was hectic flying , officers went to USA for flying training mostly on NVG. American instructors which were part of USA 6th squadron started teaching NVG at Qasim Base and later at Jacobabad too. In Islamabad our own 6 ERC Squadron being commanded by Lt Col Arshad Amin my coursemate became the hub of coordination. Major Naeem Khattak ex 31 Squadron a dear friend of mine was also part of this training event. This si how I initially gathered data , news and gossips about the ongoing operations. NVG was a new thing and Major Khattak was spending hours and hours to understand its mechanism. Within Army Aviation Command, an effort was underway to compile the history of own regiment , I thus became part of it, myself and Major General Muhammad Azam the GOC were the team and we both worked over it. I, on my part was interviewing the officers to make a narrative. Book was published in 2007 and it contains operations till 2006.

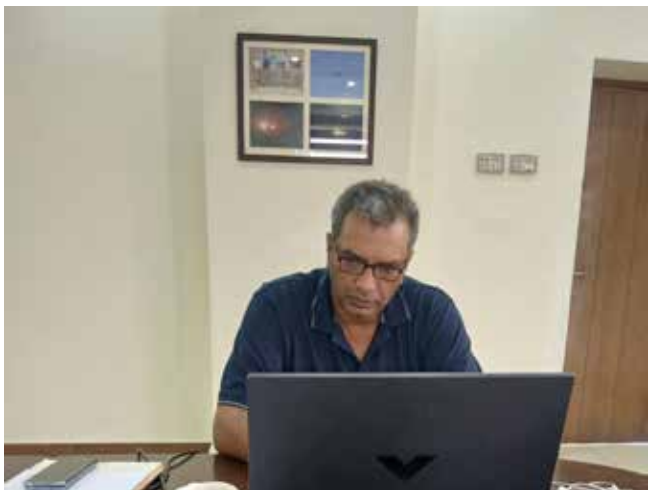
Maj Gen Nadeem Yousaf

In 2011, I approached Brigadier Tipu Karim who was COS at Aviation command , to gather data regarding the heli war in frontier area. Aim was to compare the past and present heli war which included Russia during their occupation of Afghanistan and then by USA and NATO . As a scholar it seems fascinating to read and more importantly to add knowledge to the existing one. In 2015, Major General Khalil Dar as GOC initiated an interest into the military history and preservation of the current operations, he directed Aviation School to focus on the current aviation operations, as a matter of fact , he himself drove many a times to Rahwali to attend the Mid Career Course (MCC) presentations on the subject. We collected a good amount of data from squadrons too. Let me add that between 2011-2016, I also performed as official historian of Frontier Corps KPK, and was also a scholar of Ph.D at National

Defence University (NDU). It was with Militia that one really understands the basic strands of this war on terror.

Maj Gen (Retd) Najeeb

In 2018, Combat Group published its history, it took almost six months to get it printed, the experience of collecting data acted as an experience for this book. Combat Group comprising of three odd combat squadrons, alongwith supporting maintenance battalion and refuelling and arming companies has a unique culture and traditions. Air Mustangs despite being the junior in seniority has surpassed senior squadrons as far as preservation of history is concerned. Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman who commanded Air Mustangs and Combat Group has made tremendous contributions in archiving the history. Credit is also due to Brigadier retired Rizwan for putting the entire idea into a book form. Combat Group as a tradition has a get together of serving and retired Cobra pilots and that itself affords an opportunity to gather narratives.



Brig (Retd) Wajahat Ghuman

In 2021 Major General Nadeem Yousaf initiated the project again, letters were written to the squadrons for their input. Army Aviation School was made responsible for the coordination. First and major issue is that for some reasons the writing of names on the group pictures taken on the occasions of inspection, visits and graduation parades of pilot courses has died down. It took almost two years to gather all the relevant names, contribution of Base Photographer Mr Mansoor is worth highlighting.

In the summer of 2025 active and dedicated work started on the book under the guidance of Major General Saeed Khan GOC Army Aviation. Within the same period a book Army Aviation in 1965 War was published. The entire process of the book publishing also made me wise on the current and relevant policies of publishing military history books.

Collection of data on the role of Army Aviation in War on Terror has been sifted from official War Diaries, gallantry citations raised, articles published in yearly magazine of army Aviation School, monthly ISPR publications and its press releases, annual reports of squadrons, bases and HQ Aviation Command were the most helpful in nature.

Pictures as an idiom are worth a thousand words, they convey the geography, working environments, mood of flying crew, living environments etc better than many paragraphs. Army Aviation has an edge over other regiments in this regard. An annual flight safety calendar and magazine is published by HQ Army Aviation Command, thus there is a vast collection of digital pictures starting from 2007 onwards. These pictures are mostly taken by army aviators themselves with their mobile phones camera, also each squadron asa necessity has a digital camera for flight safety and as such quality of pictures keeps improving over the years. The best shots from an aviation perspective are always the one taken from the cockpit. Base official photographers and squadron pilots are thus the main source of pictures used in this book. In 2015, Major retired Tahir Kayani with the blessing of then GOC Major Khalil Dar undertook missions for aerial photography in Northern Areas. Mr Roget a professional aerial photographer undertook sorties with 8 Army Aviation squadron and his data was copied and shared by Lt Col retired Jawwad Ahmed.

Brig (Retd) Asif Jah

A series of interviews were conducted in the HQ Army Aviation Command , in the same room (Library) where almost a quarter of century ago similar interaction was held for the first history book. Thus it was rather nostalgic in nature, to sit alone in the room staring outside and thinking of past icons. The culture of the headquarters remains the same, it is professional in nature, quiet working and always with a happy and confident outlook. Much has change , like digital locks on the office, digital entry system, the new mobile system within the army is really fascinating and very efficient., now one can get in touch with the army aviator anywhere in the country. Brigadiers retired Asif Jah and Wajahat Ghumman have left their imprints on the history through their dedication and hardwork. Both spent hours and hours narrating the events. Major General retired Khalil Dar drove all the way from Lahore to give his input. I met Major General retired Najeeb at his office in the university for well over three hours and he gave input on the rather overlooked role of Bell 412 in Noor Payo operation. Colonel Tahir commanded 21 Aviation Squadron during the Peo Char Operation and he took pain in explaining it despite his other commitments. Major General Nadeem Yousaf also spared time, he commanded two Combat Squadrons and two aviation bases thus his input matters. Brigadier Salman Ghumman (present COS) has one habit which is rather unique in present era but was an integral part of military culture in the past; he has been writing a diary for last two decades, thus his contribution as commanding officer during Operation Shallow Cut in 2016 are very positive.

Col (Retd) Tahir

Lt Col Nadeem, TJ

Lt Col Uzair (G1 Training)

Lt Col Mehboob (CO 27 Sqn)

Lt Col Adil (G1 Coord)

Col Kashif

Lt Col Asif

Col Mazhar

Lt Col Hacan

Photographer Mansoor

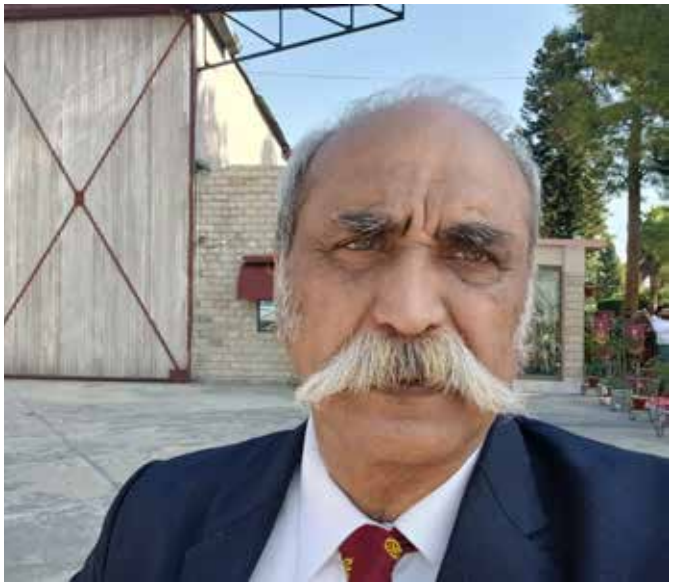
Book launching ceremony of *Pakistan Army Aviation in 1965 War held at Qasim Base on 5th October 2025. Brig (Retd) Syed Raza was the Chief Guest*
L to R: Maj Gen Saeed Khan GOC Army Aviation, Maj Gen (Retd) Azam, Lt Gen Amir Raza CGS, Brig (Retd) Syed Raza

Combat Group Reunion 2024

ARMY AVIATION COMMAND
ثبت اقدامنا
Maj Gen (R) Khalil Dar
Maj Gen (R) Tahir
Maj Gen (R) Taqi Rizvi
Maj Gen (R) Ashraf
Maj Gen Nadeem
Maj Gen Saeed
Maj Gen (R) Azam
Maj Gen (R) Nasir
Maj Gen (R) Nasir Dilawar

Change of Command Ceremony Between Maj Gen Yousaf and Maj Gen Saeed Khan 2024

Author



Major (Retd) Aamir Cheema was commissioned in 1984 (70 Long Course) joined Army Aviation in 1989 (P-30) and served in 7, 9, 3, 4, 27 and 5 Squadrons apart from rotary wing faculty. He holds a Master of Letters (War Studies) degree from University of Glasgow (2009). He has written Histories of *Army Air Defence, Tochi Scouts, Khyber Rifles, Chitral Scouts, Punjab Rangers* and coauthored *History of Army Aviation 1947-2007. Presently He is P.hd Scholar in Peshawar University.*

Errata